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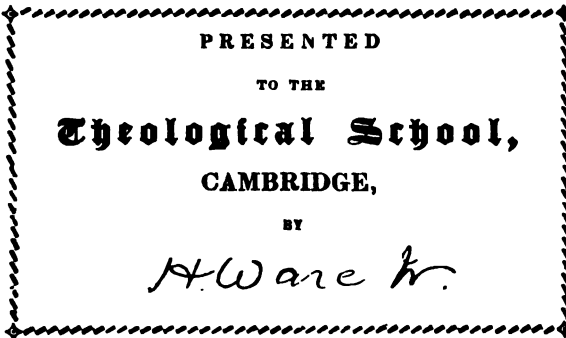
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M E M O I R

OF THE

REV. NATHAN PARKER, D. D.

By HENRY WARE, JR.

MEMOIR

OF THE

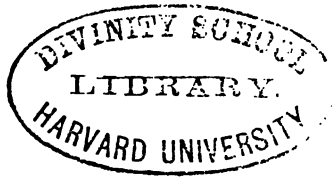
REV. NATHAN PARKER, D. D.,

LATE PASTOR OF THE SOUTH CHURCH AND PARISH IN

PORTSMOUTH, N. H.

By HENRY WARE, JR., D. D.,

PROFESSOR OF PULPIT ELOQUENCE AND THE PASTORAL CARE IN HARVARD UNIVERSITY.



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MEMOIR OF DR PARKER.

“How shall we mourn thee? — With a lofty TRUST!
With a GLAD FAITH! — whose eye, to track the Just,
Through shades and mysteries lifts a glance of LOVE.”

Mrs Hemans.

THE author of this volume of Sermons was one of those men who leave a mark on the society in which they lived. He did not leave the world as he found it. He impressed upon it the character of his mind, teaching and example. His friends feel that he ought not to pass away without a memorial, nor without some attempt to extend and perpetuate the influence of his character and principles. His principles are set forth in his sermons as they came from himself. His character presents an example of personal and professional fidelity, upon which all Christians, and especially Christian ministers, may dwell with improvement. I may not succeed in my attempt to display it; but I can truly adopt the words of John Newton in a similar case; — “If it have the same effect upon my brethren in the ministry while they read it, that it had upon me while writing it, it will humble and shame them.” May it also encourage and quicken them!

NATHAN PARKER was born at Reading, Massachusetts, on the fifth day of June, 1782. He was the son of a respectable farmer, and happily knew nothing in his younger days of those luxurious indulgences by which so many promising minds are made effeminate and slothful. He was accustomed in later life to congratulate himself on this circumstance, and to say that he owed most of what was good in his character, to his early privations and hardships. He often spoke with peculiar gratitude of the influence of his grandmother. The native elements of his character developed themselves without constraint or forcing, and gave earnest of the person that he was to be; "the child was father of the man." The buoyancy of spirits, the energy of purpose, and the power of influencing others, which distinguished him in mature life, are said to have been traits of his boyhood. It is said that he was "a great favorite with other boys, and king among them in their sports." When at the age of ten or twelve, he was severely afflicted by inflammatory rheumatism for a long period, "he would sometimes cry all night from the pain, and the next day, as soon as he had got his breakfast, be off on his crutches after partridges, which he caught in snares. He was never in the least degree vicious," it is added, "either in disposition or conduct." And such was his desire for improvement, during one period, that he would rise before others in the morning in order to secure time for reading and study.

It is not surprising, that, with such qualities, the young farmer's boy was removed from following the plough, and sent, like Amos of old, to the service of the prophets. It belongs to the yeomanry of New England to reverence learning, and many are their sturdy sons, whom they have

released from the furrow, and sent out, at no small personal sacrifice, to be fitted for the husbandry of the church, or the honorable toils of the state. Nathan, the youngest of two sons, was to be of this number. Having received his preparatory education at Boxborough, from his relative, the Rev. Joseph Willard, minister of that place, he became a member of Harvard College at the age of seventeen, and was graduated in 1803.

The succeeding year he passed at Worcester, as teacher of the Grammar School; availing himself of that honorable office, to earn the means of pursuing his professional studies, while he gratified his love of action and usefulness by imparting instruction. He had intended to study law, but being led to change his purpose, he the next year entered the family of Dr Bancroft as a student in Theology, and there remained until he began to preach. During his residence in this place he endeared himself to all who knew him, and with the venerable and distinguished divine with whom he was domesticated, he formed a friendship which continued unbroken and cordial until his death. His letters abound in expressions of attachment to him and his family.

In 1805 he was appointed Tutor in Bowdoin College, Maine, where he remained for two years, discharging its duties, and at the same time preaching on Sunday when opportunity presented. In the month of May, 1808, he preached in the way of exchange in the pulpit of the South Parish of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, then vacant after the death of Dr Haven. He was a stranger to the place and the people; few of them knew even the name of the young man whose clear good sense and simple earnestness of manner were taking hold upon their minds. The im-

pression was decided. They desired to hear him further, and the result was that the society gave him an invitation to settle as its minister on the sixth of July, in which the church concurred by a distinct vote on the thirtyfirst, and he was ordained on the fourteenth day of September.

It is not possible to place a young minister in any congregation without exposing him to great trials. They will be different in different situations, but in all they are great. Youth, inexperience, diffidence; the flattery of some, the cavils of others, the indifference of more; the urgency of these to persuade him to a worldly policy and of those to bring his religious movements to their own standard of zeal or lukewarmness; the consciousness that he is watched both by well-wishers and ill-wishers, and a trembling sense of insufficiency and responsibility;—all this, and much more, fills his path with perplexity and trial; and he enters with weakness and fear and much trembling on a work that seems the more difficult the more thoughtfully he surveys it. In the situation which Mr Parker had entered, besides these common causes of solicitude, there were other peculiar circumstances of trial. For it was not then, as it is now, a large, flourishing and eminent congregation, to be called to whose superintendence is one of the highest honors the church has to offer. On the contrary, it was a feeble and depressed society, struggling for very existence. It had been for three years without a pastor, and, suffering the evils of a destitute church, had dwindled away from its prosperity in the good days of Dr Haven, till it presented but the remnant of its former strength. In a word, all was languishing. The very situation of the meeting-house, being at an inconvenient distance from the larger part of the worshippers, helped to discourage; and only the religious

confidence of a few spirited men prevented the dissolution of the society. In undertaking the charge of a congregation under such unpropitious circumstances, he acted on his favorite principle,—we must do our duty, and leave the result with God. “I thought the path of duty plain,” he said, “and I became the minister of this people. With what feelings I entered on the office, it were vain to attempt a description. I considered that I was only making an experiment, and expected that a short time would terminate my connexion with this people.”* But Providence ordained that he should continue, and granted him a signal recompense of his fidelity and devotion. It is an example to encourage others to attempt fearlessly any work which Providence may assign them, assured that disinterested efforts in the cause of Christ cannot be lost.

As his history from this time is but the story of his ministry, I shall complete my view of this before going on with the personal narrative of his life. He appears to have laid down for himself two great principles, from adherence to which his success, through the Divine blessing, mainly resulted. The first was, to maintain a perfect independence; as he himself says, “It was among the resolutions with which I entered on my ministry, to conduct it in all respects as if I were to be forever in the office which I then entered; to adopt no temporary expedients to gain favor; but to pursue the path of duty whenever it was discovered, and wherever it might lead.”† To this principle he strictly adhered; and not less so to the second, which was, to make his profession his only care, and to allow nothing to interfere with his attention to that great concern. One might fancy that

* Sermon on leaving the old meeting-house, 1823.

† Ibid.

he was constantly repeating to himself the words of the Apostle, *Give thyself wholly to them*; and he became a minister only, as Paul was an apostle only. He felt that he should be unworthy of his place, if he could not devote himself to it exclusively. He carried this feeling so far that he used to say, "My parish first, then my family." And this claim of his people was in his view so paramount and sacred, that he would not allow himself any hours on which they might not intrude, nor any studies or pursuits beyond the range of his profession; all was theirs;—he scarcely permitted himself in recreation except for their sakes, and absence from their circle was impatiently borne by him as if with a sort of homesickness.

Entering his office with such views, he carried into all its departments the spirit which ensures success. The narrative of his life is simply the illustration of this remark. When we have related how it affected his preaching, his pastoral service, his various devices for doing good, and the power of his personal character, we have told the whole history of his ministry and showed the secret of its efficiency.

I am inclined to dwell somewhat at large on the character of his Preaching, because it seems to me to have been formed on the most just principles, and to offer important suggestions for the consideration of those engaged in the same work. The single aim of his preaching seems to have been usefulness. In the choice of his subjects, and in his mode of composition and delivery, he sacredly excluded all consideration of himself, his own reputation or the mere taste of his hearers; he considered simply what would do good. His sermons were thus remarkably characteristic

of himself, — plain, unpretending, unambitious, but strong in manly sense, and pre-eminently serious and evangelical. He loved those views best which are most peculiarly Christian, and that mode of presenting them which appeals most directly to men's sense of responsibility. The adaptation of Christianity to man as being in a state of imperfection and sin and needing great exertion to bring him to holiness and God, seemed to him the view on which the preacher should rest. Therefore he was accustomed to address men as sinners, exposed to ruin and needing to be reclaimed. Whence repentance was esteemed by him the grand theme of the pulpit. Whatever my subject may be, he used to say, I always come round to repentance before I have done with it. Christ began with it, and men will need it, at least as long as I am here to preach to them. He thought it a sad error to address promiscuous congregations as if all were interested in religion and needed but to make progress in it. He knew that the great majority need to be persuaded to *begin* a religious life; and, as he remarked shortly before his death, he esteemed those the best sermons which urge men to begin to be religious and teach them how to begin. It was this idea which suggested his advice to a young preacher, to remember, in preparing every sermon, that it might be the last discourse which some impenitent sinner would have the opportunity to hear; and to say something which should be suited to touch the heart of such an one.

His adherence to these maxims gave a weighty and affecting tone to his pulpit. It also established a central point about which all his teaching revolved, and to which all was referred. It enabled his hearers to discern to what the whole system tended, and showed them what use is to

be made of every truth. Some preachers fail of presenting any such rallying point. They discourse at random on a great variety of topics, but have no one grand idea running through them all, by which they are connected together and made to appear as parts of one great whole. In consequence of which their ministry has no unity, no purpose, no tendency to any result; the blows they strike may be powerful and true, but there is no concert between them, and they are as those that beat the air. Mr Parker had an aim from the first; he fixed his attention on one object, and had reference to that in all that he preached; thinking every discourse thrown away which did not help to effect it. In consequence of which his preaching was altogether practical, and progressive toward a definable result.

Not that he neglected the discussion of truth and avoided theological speculation. On the contrary he was fond of it, and often pursued it with evident delight in a train of close and even metaphysical reasoning. His hearers speak with fond recollection of many such efforts, when his strong and sagacious sense pursued and dissected some knotty subject, and laid it open to the satisfactory comprehension of all. But he regarded such discussion as wholly subservient to a further end, as simply preparatory to the application he was to make to the conscience and the heart. He esteemed it little less than sacrilege to spend the sacred hour of public worship in debating some problem in ethics and divinity, and to leave it without pointing out to the hearers the use they should make of it. He knew that speculative truth is good for nothing, except so far as it acts upon the character; and that it is made to act on the character, not by simply being explained to the understanding, but by being made also interesting to the affections and urgent to the con-

science. When thus applied, he recognised it as the Christian orator's great instrument ; and hence he did not regard that as the most truly practical preaching which deals only in the inculcation of outward virtue, and contents itself with the enforcement of positive precepts. "Precepts are of little use," he said, "when the doctrines which enforce and support them are not regarded." Remembering that men are to be sanctified by the *truth*, he was not backward to urge the doctrines of religion ; he knew that they are the only foundation on which holy principle and steadfast virtue can be erected, and that no man will care enough for religion to build up for himself a religious character, unless he is interested in the glorious realities which religious doctrine unfolds. But he would not treat those doctrines controversially, in the way of debate and disputation. He thought this more likely to hinder than to promote the practical influence he desired. He explained them agreeably to his own view of them, and in their own connexion with duty, leaving erroneous views to perish of themselves. As he himself expressed it, "he acted on the maxim, that the best way to refute error is to preach the truth ; and he did not think it his duty to bring forward and refute in a controversial manner the errors which exist among Protestant Christians, any more than to bring forward and refute the errors of Popery."

Instead of controversially, he may rather be said to have preached religious doctrines *experimentally* ; for it was in their bearing on the affections and desires, the joys and trials of the spirit ; on the struggles of the soul with its temptations and sorrows, and in the encouragement, strength, and peace which they impart in the various conflicts of the spiritual life, that he habitually delighted to think of them

and speak of them. Hence the unction and impression which the most serious and devout found in his discourses, and the interest which they had to those who were anxiously seeking for the way of life.

Thus his preaching was useful from its constant union of sound instruction with affectionate exhortation. It excited the mind to a train of thought, and on that thought built an appeal to the heart and conscience. Without any display of what is called oratory, or of the elegance and splendor which excite admiration and applause, it possessed that truth, straight-forwardness, energy and fervor, which enchain attention, fasten conviction, and leave lasting impressions. In all this it was, as I said, a fac-simile of the man; and not least so in the fact that it lost nothing, in respect to its power, but rather gained, from familiarity. As those who knew him most intimately, best appreciated his uncommon worth of character, so those who most habitually heard his preaching best realized its uncommon power. Its sway over the heart, its strength to move the affections, to impress and overcome,—though sometimes felt by strangers, who have been known to carry away lasting impressions from a single sermon,—were yet best understood by those who found it the more irresistible the more they were accustomed to it. How far more valuable than that showy oratory, which astonishes and captivates those who hear it for the first time, but which palls upon repetition, and puts to sleep those who are accustomed to it.

In his preparation for the pulpit, though he had no regard for the merely literary excellences of composition, he yet was conscientiously careful; laborious, however, rather in thinking and arranging his thoughts, than in putting

them into form. His manner seems to have been to meditate his subjects thoroughly before writing, and then to write rapidly and with little revision. Oftentimes on Saturday evening he would walk his study for hours, revolving his subject in his head, maturing his thoughts, and exciting himself by reflection, putting nothing on paper till this process was finished, and then, at a late hour, would sit down at his desk and pour out rapidly and without intermission the result of his preparation. This practice, not unanalogous to that of the extemporaneous speaker, gave something of the strength and ardor of the extemporary manner to his style of composition.

He never preached in his church extempore. But he was accustomed from an early date of his ministry to speak in a familiar way at a private meeting, held in the house where he boarded, and he thus gradually prepared himself for a more public service, which he afterwards conducted in a hall or lecture-room during a large part of every year. He was not gifted with any native fluency of speech; and his first efforts at extemporaneous speaking are represented as having been far from success. Some of his friends doubted if it were worth while for him to persevere. But he was not to be discouraged; he told them that if a few of them would stand by him, he would learn. They did so, and he learned. And it should be distinctly told for the sake of other beginners, that by dint of application and perseverance he became a ready, interesting and occasionally eloquent speaker. His little evening meetings were the favorite resort of those who most valued his influence. There he was seen and heard to the greatest advantage. Unshackled by notes, unembarrassed by a huge house and a promiscuous assembly, surrounded by

confiding friends and sure of their sympathy, he gave free scope to his mind and feelings, and was often borne away by his excitement into regions of thought and imagination which surprised both himself and those who heard him. I understand that he placed great confidence on these meetings as eminently adapted to be useful. His particular opinions respecting them may be learned from a passage in a letter to a young minister, which is so just and important that it deserves to be quoted at length.

“ With regard to extra meetings for religious instruction, I will make a few remarks, suggested by my own experience. I believe that they may be very useful ; but great discretion and independence are necessary in managing them. They should never be placed on the same ground as is *public worship on the Sabbath*. People should not be taught, that attending these meetings is a commanded duty, and that all worldly duties must yield to them ; nor are those to be censured who entirely neglect them, provided they exhibit the proper evidence of piety. I believe too that these meetings, as to their frequency, and the manner of conducting them, should be *entirely* under the control of the minister. He should appoint them when he thinks expedient, and discontinue them, when his own health, or the situation of his people demand that they be discontinued. They may be frequent, or otherwise, as occasion may require, always having regard to circumstances, and guarding carefully against producing a surfeit of preaching, the worst kind of surfeits. In the management of such meetings, it is worse than useless to attempt to run a race with those, who depend for success on the mere excitement of passion.

* * * I am disposed to think that in these meetings, plain instruction should be dispensed, in a plain and forcible man-

ner ; and especially that great care should be taken to render people able to read with understanding the Scriptures, and that a pungent application of the truths communicated should be made to their hearts and consciences. Extemporary preaching on these occasions I believe to be the best : and you will find it not difficult to practise, and a great relief to you in the discharge of your duties. With respect to the devotional exercises, I uniformly ask no one to assist me. I have several individuals, whose aid would be valuable to me ; but I do not call upon them for assistance. My reasons are these. Those best able to be useful in this way, are very modest men. It would be painful to them to make themselves prominent, and nothing but a strong sense of duty would induce them to do it. There are, on the other hand, others who would delight to be thus distinguished, but who are totally unfit for the service. If I were to ask assistance from the wise only, the vain would be grieved, and become uneasy. If I were to call upon the latter, it would destroy what little humility they now possess ; injure them, and as I think, the cause of religion. I therefore perform myself all the devotional exercises."

It is often thought that private meetings, such as are here spoken of, should be made to have a different object from those of the regular congregation on Sunday. But Dr Parker appears to have thought otherwise. I cannot find that in his selection of subjects or his manner of treating them, he varied from his ordinary preaching, excepting that in his private lectures he pursued *courses* of subjects, and thus was somewhat more systematic in his instruction. The topics of these courses were very various : The exposition of a book ; a view of fundamental truths and duties ; the

history and ritual of the Old Testament; the parables of Christ; the being and attributes of God:—which last series is remembered with peculiar delight by those who heard it. But various as they were, he adhered sacredly to his rule of immediate usefulness. Whatever the discussion, he always conducted it to an appeal to the heart and conscience. You would suppose it had been selected for no other purpose than to afford an opportunity for an exhortation to a religious life, and that instruction and argument had no other end than to lay the foundation of a call to faith, repentance and obedience.

I close this view of his character as a preacher, with a description, from one who heard him much, of his manner at these private lectures. It is written in a glowing style, but is valuable for its corroboration of what has been said, and for some hints respecting the preacher's personal appearance.

“And here I must say, I think he was truly eloquent; or if it was not eloquence, it certainly had all its effects. Often were his hearers chained down by the hour together, in almost breathless silence, by these solemn and pathetic appeals;—and what gave a charm and effect to his eloquence, was the remarkable and ever varying expressions of his fine face. With a countenance sometimes haggard, worn down, perhaps, by a series of almost sleepless nights, and painfully contending with his physical difficulty—at the commencement, from his faltering manner, it might be doubted whether he would be able to proceed. But soon, all doubts would vanish; as he became engaged in his subject, his dark eye would brighten, his countenance become more and more animated, his language more and more rich and fervent,

and his whole manner more and more warm and glowing, till the infirmities of the flesh were merged in the triumph of the spirit, and preacher and hearer, unconscious of time, were completely carried away by the sublimity of the subject. In some of these touching appeals, I have seen the tear start, the spirit of the hearer quail and his cheek burn with shame, as with a flashing eye, a contemptuous curl of the lip, and a deepening shade upon his dark countenance, expressive of his abhorrence of the enormity and detestation at the meanness of sin, he laid bare to itself some bosom loaded with guilt, and probed to the quick its slumbering conscience. But his severity was confined to sin in the abstract; his heart melted with pity for the sinner. Depicting to him with a subdued tone, and in most mournful strains, the awful consequences of continued transgression, the doom of the ungodly; he would,—his countenance lighting up with an almost heavenly radiance, and a sweet smile all the while playing upon his face, as if he had discharged a painful duty, and thrown a heavy burden from his heart, and was in haste to touch a theme more congenial with his own pure spirit,—he would, with the most winning accents, descant upon the beauty of holiness—the peace and joy of believing—the bliss of heaven,—and kindred subjects, on which he so much delighted to dwell, long after the time, usually allotted to such exercises, had expired.”

Dr Parker's views of the ministry and its objects, as well as the bent of his own mind, led him to attach peculiar importance to the private duties of the pastoral relation. The mere preacher, however excellent, seemed to him to be fulfilling very partially the design of the sacred office. He

regarded the minister as the servant and guide of the people, not only, like the priests of old, by appearing before God for them in the temple, but by a constant intercourse of sympathy, counsel and kind offices, teaching from house to house, and watching for souls in season and out of season. Upon this idea he formed his own ministry. As I have already said, he regarded his time, his knowledge, his talents, himself, as not his own, but as belonging to his people, and to be devoted absolutely to their service. He was therefore always amongst them, sharing their joys and sorrows, and close at hand in every moment of trial, anxiety and sin, with consolation and warning. This was his favorite employment. Many men have more frequent formal conversations on religion ; perhaps he had less of this than would have been well. But there is a religious silence as well as a religious speech, and the very air and presence of a truly devout man has oftentimes more influence than an exhortation. When occasion required, he could speak, and at any length ; but his habit was, to watch the course of conversation, turn it imperceptibly to useful channels, and point to the Christian moral by a brief remark or a single expression ; and many are the weighty sayings of wisdom and truth, couched in his own terse and occasionally quaint manner, which are remembered and repeated, but which might have been forgotten if thrown out in a great flood of words.

It was in acts rather than words that his influence as a pastor lay ; acts, which sometimes cost him no little sacrifice, and which evinced a reality of faith in God and a strength of sympathy in men, which mere words could not have expressed. The substantial kindnesses which he thus rendered did service to religion, and testify to his fidelity.

For one of doubtful and agitated mind, he would give up hour after hour, week after week, thinking no time too much, till by the long companionship and sympathy he had won him to peace and God. For the aged, infirm, and poor, he had time to spare, that he might cheer the heaviness of their solitude by familiar and holy talk. To the sick he would go with a smiling face, not for a hasty and hurried visit with formal common-places about patience and prayer, but to sit with them and wait upon them as a brother or a son; and in the chamber of death, with quiet self-possession he would cheer the departing sufferer as he sat long watching by his side, and bring down the peace of heaven to the dark scene of trial. In all this, nothing seemed to be done in a manner merely professional, or because he was the minister and was expected to be present and do a certain duty. He entered into it with a feeling as if it concerned himself, and thence derived a power in such scenes, which never can belong to him who is guided merely by notions of clerical propriety and of what is suitable for the occasion. He threw himself into the occasion and became a part of it. He would stay about the bed of a dying friend, watch him through the night, support his head in the agony of death, and close his eyes in their last sleep. At such seasons he had great power to sustain and soothe; not through his much speaking, but by the expression of his whole demeanor, the affections of his soul speaking through his eyes, his countenance, his whole mien. His words might be few, but they were chosen words, and the trust reposed in him made them powerful. To one he said, as her self-distrusting spirit trembled at approaching death, "He will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax," and her answering smile showed that the pro-

mise went home with a soothing power. On another occasion, as the fearful silence of the chamber of the dying at mid-day was broken by the cheerful notes of a bird alighting on a tree near the open window, he brightly said, "God is still good ; — he does not forsake his creatures." In this way he said what was suggested by circumstances. Like his Master, he drew lessons from the most common objects, and sanctified trivial occurrences by making a holy use of them.

He did not go through such scenes without severe trials of feeling, which sometimes almost unmanned him but such was his self-constraint that he would always appear collected and calm to those whom he was called to comfort and sustain. So that his wife would sometimes remark to him, that his friends would not suspect that he had any real feeling for them. His reply to which was altogether characteristic: "It is of no consequence whether they know that I have or not."

It is a gratification to know that his solitudes and cares were not unrewarded. He was not left to mourn over the inefficacy of the truth which he had preached ; but was happy enough to witness in others, as he afterward experienced himself, the peace and hope which it imparts to the trusting spirit in its approach to the tomb. From among the numerous evidences of this, I quote from a letter written in August, 1826.

"The events of the present season have been unusually afflictive to me. June, 1826, is strongly associated in my mind with June, 1812. I then lost one whom I regarded as a father* ; I have now been deprived of one whom I loved as a brother† ; and now, as then, other calamities

* Dr Buckminster.

† Mr N. A. Haven, Jr.

have pressed heavily upon me, and in rapid succession. In one short month five of my most interesting parishioners have been called away from me. But you will be surprised, and perhaps think that time has blunted the little sensibility which once I may have possessed, when I inform you, than for the last two months, I have been far happier, than I had been for the year preceding. I am not insensible of the losses which I have sustained. They are great and apparently irreparable losses ; but they have admitted uncommon consolations. I had for many months been guilty of cherishing very discouraging views of the effects of my ministry, and been almost tempted to say, I will speak no more in the name of the Lord. As I stood by the bed of death, I have felt the reproof there administered to me. I have seen those to whom the world held out every thing to enchain them to the earth, calm and happy in the immediate prospect of breaking away from all earthly ties and endearments. I have seen those who have been left to mourn, around whom desolation seemed to be spreading wide and threatening to destroy every earthly hope, most confidently acquiescing in the unsearchable dispensations of Providence, expressing, while their tears flowed fast, their gratitude to God, and their humble prayer, that they might bring honor to that Saviour, who had guided their departed friends in life, and given them hope in death. My heart has been comforted. However fruitless may have been my labors, I cannot doubt the efficacy of the religion, which it is my duty and my honor to preach.

“The events which have taken place, have excited an increased interest in religion among us ; and called me to greater efforts to assist my people in their inquiries. I trust

mise went home with a soothing power. On another occasion, as the fearful silence of the chamber of the dying at mid-day was broken by the cheerful notes of a bird alighting on a tree near the open window, he brightly said, "God is still good ; — he does not forsake his creatures." In this way he said what was suggested by circumstances. Like his Master, he drew lessons from the most common objects, and sanctified trivial occurrences by making a holy use of them.

He did not go through such scenes without severe trials of feeling, which sometimes almost unmanned him but such was his self-constraint that he would always appear collected and calm to those whom he was called to comfort and sustain. So that his wife would sometimes remark to him, that his friends would not suspect that he had any real feeling for them. His reply to which was altogether characteristic: "It is of no consequence whether they know that I have or not."

It is a gratification to know that his solitudes and cares were not unrewarded. He was not left to mourn over the inefficacy of the truth which he had preached ; but was happy enough to witness in others, as he afterward experienced himself, the peace and hope which it imparts to the trusting spirit in its approach to the tomb. From among the numerous evidences of this, I quote from a letter written in August, 1826.

"The events of the present season have been unusually afflictive to me. June, 1826, is strongly associated in my mind with June, 1812. I then lost one whom I regarded as a father* ; I have now been deprived of one whom I loved as a brother† ; and now, as then, other calamities

* Dr Buckminster.

† Mr N. A. Haven, Jr.

them into form. His manner seems to have been to meditate his subjects thoroughly before writing, and then to write rapidly and with little revision. Oftentimes on Saturday evening he would walk his study for hours, revolving his subject in his head, maturing his thoughts, and exciting himself by reflection, putting nothing on paper till this process was finished, and then, at a late hour, would sit down at his desk and pour out rapidly and without intermission the result of his preparation. This practice, not unanalogous to that of the extemporaneous speaker, gave something of the strength and ardor of the extemporary manner to his style of composition.

He never preached in his church extempore. But he was accustomed from an early date of his ministry to speak in a familiar way at a private meeting, held in the house where he boarded, and he thus gradually prepared himself for a more public service, which he afterwards conducted in a hall or lecture-room during a large part of every year. He was not gifted with any native fluency of speech; and his first efforts at extemporaneous speaking are represented as having been far from success. Some of his friends doubted if it were worth while for him to persevere. But he was not to be discouraged; he told them that if a few of them would stand by him, he would learn. They did so, and he learned. And it should be distinctly told for the sake of other beginners, that by dint of application and perseverance he became a ready, interesting and occasionally eloquent speaker. His little evening meetings were the favorite resort of those who most valued his influence. There he was seen and heard to the greatest advantage. Unshackled by notes, unembarrassed by a huge house and a promiscuous assembly, surrounded by

imitating the sober order of Providence, should lead the way to charity and truth.

It was in this spirit that Dr Parker projected and executed the several plans which he set on foot for the improvement of his flock, and by means of which he effected so much for its advancement in knowledge and true holiness. It is necessary to describe these at some length, because they exhibit his pastoral policy and the genius of his ministry, and present the picture of the religious organization of society on principles and in a method which can hardly fail to secure happy results wherever adopted.

The first of these in point of time, and certainly not the least in usefulness, was the formation of the Church, that is, the communicants,—which had formerly been a body, like most churches, set apart simply for maintaining the ordinances, — into an association for religious improvement and benevolent action. It was a favorite idea of Dr Parker, that the Founder of Christianity was the originator of that great system of associated action by which his followers are in the present age accomplishing so much. The institution of the Christian church was the first instance of this association, and by the power which belongs to it as such, it has made its way through the world. He wished to restore to the body of the communicants its place and duty in this regard. He thought that it possessed advantages beyond most other methods of organization, for the promotion of truth and charity. In an Address delivered in 1824, before the Ministerial Conference in Berry Street, Boston, he explained his views on this point, and illustrated the principles on which he was acting. I regret that no copy of this Address has been found among his papers. It was in conformity with those views, that the church in his

own parish had instituted, in 1813, a regular series of quarterly meetings as of a society for devotion and charity. At these meetings is transacted all the business which ordinarily demands attention, such as the appointment of delegates to any council, the care of the charity funds, and the discussion of cases of discipline. Then conversation ensues on the state of religion, the condition and wants of the poor or tempted brethren, and the measures to be devised for their relief. The meetings are thus a great means of keeping up a mutual acquaintance among the members and a proper Christian sympathy in each other—an end still further secured, by the regulation that every individual shall keep by him a list of the members. Since 1823, one of the brethren has for each meeting written a dissertation on some important subject of religious inquiry or duty, which has given a direction to the conversation of the evening. Thus the Church acts as a perpetual standing committee of inquiry and charity, ready to consider and pursue any suggestions of truth and usefulness. It is not a nominal, but a visible and effective bond of faith and love; and a constant excitement to individual activity, fidelity and watchfulness. The records of the meetings testify to the many solemn and affecting interviews to which this arrangement has given rise; they contain elaborate reports on church relations and personal responsibility, and discussions of vital questions of truth and duty. To show the spirit of the institution, and the influence which it has been adapted to exert, I am desirous of extracting a brief passage from a Report on the state of the church, in August, 1822.

This report showed that the condition of the Church had remained very nearly the same for more than a century. In answering the question, why there had been no improve-

ment during later years, three causes of hindrance were enumerated : — the controversial spirit of the times, prevalent errors respecting the Lord's supper, and the imperfections of church members. Each of these causes is dwelt upon at some length. I quote a portion of the appeal to the brethren under the last head ; premising, that it was written by one of the lay members.

“ Perpetual watchfulness and care are the conditions on which we hold all our virtues as well as all our worldly possessions. As *repentance* is the foundation of all Christian virtue and implies an abhorrence of sin as such, — do we keep alive our strong impressions on this subject ? Do we ever think lightly of sin, or lead others to believe that we do ? Do we give any countenance to the commission of sin, by our presence, or indirect approbation or permission ?

“ Christian penitence is accompanied and followed by *faith*. Do we believe, — really believe, — all the promises and threatenings of Jesus Christ ? Do we feel daily and hourly that the eye of God is upon us ? Do we realize that we shall certainly appear before the judgment seat of Christ, not merely to answer for the deeds done in the body, but to give an account of every idle word, and to have every thought of the heart revealed ? Do we act as if we were indeed pilgrims and strangers in the world ? or are we as much excited by its ambition and allured by its pleasures and engrossed by its business and distracted by its cares and grieved by its troubles, as if we had no other world upon which to fix our attention ?”

Similar inquiries are then suggested respecting the duties of Christian love and active benevolence. And the Report ends with recommending, that a day be set apart for self-examination and devotion by each member of the

church ; when "all the members of this church should as far as may be possible and consistent with their usual avocations, employ their thoughts and devote their leisure moments to the purposes above mentioned.

"And that the same good work may be always kept in mind, they would further recommend, that one hour (say from eight to nine o'clock, of the Saturday evening preceding the communion,) should for the future be set apart by all the members of this church, and employed in reflecting and conversing upon the best mode of advancing the interests of the church, or in prayer for its welfare. They believe that such a course would give every individual a deeper interest in the general prosperity of the church, and lead him to exert a happier influence on those around him."

The measures here recommended were adopted ; and some years afterward, the report was again taken up and the resolutions renewed. One easily understands how religion must flourish, when its friends thus unite in efforts to increase its power over themselves and to extend it to others.

The benefits of this meeting had not been long experienced, when it was perceived to be desirable that they should be extended to the female members of the church. Accordingly a quarterly meeting was established, when they assembled together in a large room belonging to one of their number, passed the afternoon in social and religious converse, and took tea together. Their minister was regularly present on the occasion, and led their devotions ; and he delighted to observe, that, through this simple means, the bonds of sympathy and good will were essentially strengthened, and that, by the substantial acts of kindness to which it gave birth, the happiness as well as improvement of many was greatly promoted. Similar objects were

effected by a monthly meeting of the ladies of the Parish, when the time is past in reading and working, and subscriptions are made for the encouragement of domestic missions and other religious charities.

The next institution was that of the Sunday school, a favorite object with Dr Parker, which was commenced in 1818. He introduced the project in a sermon on Sunday, and immediately had the happiness of securing the enlightened and devoted co-operation of men, more than one of whom were abundantly competent to the good management of such an institution. It is striking and instructive to look back to that period, when the Sunday school was a novelty in the land, slowly welcomed by the community, and coldly favored if not expressly discountenanced by many excellent persons, who thought it unnecessary in this country, ill-adapted to our state of society, and likely to be hurtful to religious instruction in families,—and to perceive how readily Dr Parker and his friends penetrated beyond the objections to it, and entered into a full perception of its merits. Under such auspices, the school had no infancy; it succeeded at once; it reached its maturity while other schools were struggling with the first obstacles. When we remember who were his coadjutors, we do not wonder that he surrendered the management of the school wholly into their hands, and adopted it as a principle that the charge of the Sunday school should be given to the laity, without superintendence or responsibility on the part of the minister. He thought the effect of religious teaching on the children and on their parents likely to be far better if it should come, not from him whose profession it is to teach religion, but from men in the active walks of life, whose devotedness to this service on Sunday would be

a new and impartial testimony to the value of religion. One perceives that there is force in this reason ; and in the present case it was fully justified by the result. But how few ministers can act upon it ! In how few societies, especially the smaller ones, are men to be found of that happy combination of qualities which fits them to be leaders in so difficult and delicate a service ! How rare are those to whom the minister can safely delegate his responsibility for the instruction and character of his children ! It is cause for congratulation that the number of such persons is multiplying ; that more and more of our youth are becoming qualified to take the active and intelligent oversight of this great work. But it cannot yet be safely laid down as a general rule, that the minister shall have no personal share in the labor or responsibility. In Dr Parker's society it was otherwise.* He was able to relieve himself from all solicitude respecting the duties of superintendence and instruction. He attended the meetings of the teachers, and visited and addressed the school quarterly ; he never ceased to regard it with intense interest as one of the strong pillars of religion ; it was not long before his death that he manifested that interest by securing for it a valuable legacy from a dying friend ; but the actual management he left entirely to others, and that with as much gratitude for their services as confidence in them. " Were it in my power," he says, in an address delivered to them at their request, " I would express to you the sentiments with which I regard your exertions in the cause of Christ. But I will not obtrude on you my private feelings. Be assured of my warmest grati-

* See a letter from Mr Haven to Professor Ticknor, published in the volume of Mr Haven's *Remains*.

tude, and that I regard with the liveliest interest your pious and benevolent labors."

There was still needed another institution to complete Dr Parker's plan of religious organization, and that was founded in the year 1826. It was an Association for mutual religious improvement. Here he collected from forty to fifty of the young and middle aged men of the society, for the consideration and discussion of important questions in religion and morality. At each monthly meeting, a dissertation was read by one of the members, the subject of which then formed a theme for conversation. Dr Parker entered into the design with great spirit, and imparted to it a strong interest by the manner in which he elucidated the questions which came before them. His custom was to give at some length his own views of a subject at the close of the evening, answering objections and clearing away obscurities, setting the truth on its strong foundations, and especially taking care to give it a bearing on moral duty and personal religion. These meetings are said to have been full of instruction and excitement. They roused many minds to exercise on high subjects of thought, and settled opinions on the basis of inquiry and reason; at the same time that they opened to many men a new power and new source of enjoyment in the practice of expressing their minds in conversation and writing.

By the several means of religious influence now described, instruction and impression were carried to every portion of the society; a principle of union and life was imparted to it. The members came to feel as members of one body, who had some concern with each other; not as pew-holders, going to a certain place to hear a sermon, and acknowledging no further connexion with the house or the

people, but as partners and portions of the community assembled there ; caring for their fellow worshipers and cared for by them ; pleased to meet, and ready to serve each other in other places and at other times. One cannot doubt that he who addresses a congregation collected on this principle, must preach with a heartiness and soul which he could feel under no other circumstances. If he be as the head of a family, the personal friend of all, while all are the personal friends of himself and of the rest, he writes and speaks with another and more earnest feeling than he, who addresses an assembly of unconnected individuals. There must be much of the same difference as between the case of a man who spends a day in the bosom of his trusting and affectionate family, and of him who spends it in a strange hotel, with persons accidentally brought together, who separate without caring to meet again. Christianity was intended to bring men together ; its institutions are social and fraternal ; its true and best work is done, only when it has made men brothers and given them a sympathising interest in each other. Its work is hindered and thwarted, so far as they remain strangers and indifferent to each other. It is a crying evil in the structure of modern society, in the larger towns especially, that it opposes to so great an extent the proper union of Christian worshipers ; that it collects together in the house of God and at the Lord's table, men and women who know not each other, and then, instead of binding them together as members of one body, allows them to think it consistent with their profession that they continue strangers. This is far from what ought to be. It behoves Christians to exert themselves to counteract this social evil, and give proper scope to the great Christian relation. Until they do this.

their religion will fail of fulfilling its tendency, will be kept back from its full action on the welfare of society. It is a thing which they may do. It cannot be attempted without partial success. Let any minister heartily undertake it, under some judicious system like that just described, and he will find himself so seconded by the desires of many souls and the native tendency of Christianity, that he cannot wholly fail. Discouragements there may be for a time ; but they will disappear before a resolute perseverance and the kindliness of human and Christian affection ; and when the work is accomplished, he will enjoy an unspeakable happiness in preaching the word and breaking the bread of life, no longer to an accidental assemblage, but to a band of brothers.

But the power of Dr Parker's ministry was not solely owing to these various measures by which he brought religion to act upon men. Much was owing to his personal character. I referred to this when speaking of his attendance on the afflicted ; I speak of it now generally. It is evident, that in a state of society like that which exists in this country, the efficacy of religious institutions must essentially depend on the personal character of him who superintends them ; especially when he lives alway in the presence of the people. To them he is the acting and embodied representation of the religion which he teaches. His character is the interpreter of his preaching, it is the application of his doctrine, it is the standard by which men measure the length and breadth and depth of his principles. If he lived apart from them in mysterious and unvisited solitude, and was never seen except when he came forth from his hermitage like some

old prophet with thrilling words from another world, his real character would be of little importance ; for their imaginations would clothe him with any degree of sanctity. But he who walks among them in daily life, like other men, has no refuge from his indiscretions and faults in the fancies of the observers. He is exposed to scrutiny, and must submit to it. He must calculate on having all his instructions respecting virtue, humility, purity and kindness interpreted by the construction which he himself in his every day life seems to put upon them. As it was said to the French preacher, " Father, when I hear you speak in the pulpit respecting the severity of a religious life, my heart sinks with despair, but when I meet you in the world, my courage revives again ;" — so men are always more ready to follow the carelessness of a preacher's life than the sobriety of his precepts. On the other hand, he who can endure this strict ordeal of daily observation, and is seen to verify in his character the picture of goodness which he has drawn in his discourses, imparts a power and sacredness to his doctrine which no eloquence or genius could have bestowed. He is listened to with a reverence and trust which the highest oratory never commands.

Dr Parker was one of those who could stand this severe trial. His virtues bore examination, and his foibles did not become greater on closer inspection. His perpetual living in the presence of men, so far from contradicting or weakening the power of his preaching, incalculably augmented its power by the fidelity with which his example seconded it ; gave it a power, in fact, which those could hardly understand, who did not know the man. It was the illustration of his life which made his teaching what it was to his people.

It would be easy here to use the language of indiscriminate eulogy, and pass off some general outline of a Christian man for a description of the man before us. But if I rightly apprehend it, his character had some marked features; and it is by these, that he will be most faithfully represented and his life most truly explained. And I am inclined to think that the pervading characteristic, that which appeared always prominent and gave complexion to the whole, was what may be called *truthfulness*. He was a *TRUE* man. In thought, heart, purpose, word, act, deportment, directly and indirectly, all was true. Nothing was designed, nothing done or said, for appearance's sake, or through mere expediency. He exhibited himself so undisguisedly, with such straight-forwardness, that an observer would spontaneously say, that is a man to be confided in. This it was, in connexion with his clear-sighted good sense, which caused him to be trusted in the manner already alluded to. This led him to that open plainness of speech, amounting sometimes to bluntness, which has been spoken of. I cannot help suspecting, also, that from this originated that oddity or quaintness of expression which so much characterised his familiar conversation. Might it not have been at first employed as a cover to bold and unpalatable truths? Half sarcastic and half humorous, stingingly severe yet jocose in expression, he was able to say inoffensively whatever he pleased,—his manner acted instead of a formal apology for plain dealing. But whether so designed or not, or whether this peculiarity were the mere result of a sportive habit of mind, it certainly had the effect which I ascribe to it. Those who most keenly felt the censure could feel no resentment; for there was evidently not only no ill will, but the greatest kindness and

good humor in him who spoke it. "Every one who came within the sphere of his influence," a friend has truly said, "felt perfect confidence in his sincerity, which would not allow him to flatter his weakness, or palliate his faults; and yet his kindness and benevolence were so apparent, that they knew his judgments would be lenient as well as just. I think there was in him a rare union of stern integrity, uncompromising detestation and scorn of all that was false and wrong, united with perfect kindness and the most tender sympathy with the imperfections of human nature."

His influence over men was therefore that of character. He did not strive for influence. He did not aim at power. It came to him. It belonged to him, as it does to every man of single-mindedness and trust-worthiness. Men saw that he was what he appeared to be, and that his objects were what he professed; that he was not considering what would be expedient, — he had a contempt for those who belittle great intentions by asking whether it be *expedient* to labor for them; — he considered only right and duty. Therefore they felt that he was to be trusted.

There was another trait in his character which gave him influence. His friends remarked in him an uncommon knowledge of human nature, an intuitive perception of character, a singular and almost prophetic sagacity by which he penetrated men's bosoms and discerned foibles or dispositions of which they were themselves scarcely aware. He evidently made man and human character his study; and having, as one expresses it, "a strong faith in the moral power and results of principles," he was accustomed to reason from the act to the motive and from appearances to the reality, so as oftentimes to startle those with whom he conversed by unveiling them unawares to themselves.

This talent of observation extended to men's affairs as well as characters. It used to be a matter of wonder to his friends how he should, without officious inquisitiveness or habits of worldly gossip, be yet so sagacious and familiar in secular concerns. An upright trust-worthy man, possessing such penetration into men and things, could not fail to possess influence. Then it is to be added, that he was accustomed to express himself on all subjects with perfect frankness and directness. If he must speak of sin, especially of the mean and base sins, he would use no palliating or softening expressions, nor take pains to hide the expression of indignation and contempt which burned upon his countenance. "A lie he would call a lie, and as such he would treat it, in all its forms and disguises; and if anything human would make the heart of the deceiver quail, it was such a look as I have sometimes seen dart from his usually mild and benevolent face."* Finesse, management, manœuvring, cunning, in the conduct of any affairs, met his heartiest detestation. Of other sins he would speak with compassion, because, he said, he could conceive them to be occasioned by unexpected temptation, sudden passion, power of circumstances, faults of education; but this could have no palliation, — it was a deliberate plotting to do wrong and to do it by deception.

Another leading characteristic was his disinterestedness. "He was the most disinterested person I ever knew," said one who knew him intimately for many years. "His time, his studies, his labors, his money, even his personal sufferings, seemed to be considered by him only as they might benefit

* Mr Foster's Address.

others." His disregard to selfish considerations was apparent in his whole demeanor and course of life. It was seen in his giving time and thought to others, at seasons when disease and suffering might have excused him for thinking only of himself. As a preacher it showed itself in his shrinking from commendation; he dreaded lest he might perchance be brought to mingle a regard to his own reputation with the feelings which he carried into the pulpit; and as a pastor and friend it showed itself in his habitual attention to the welfare of others. He could not even perceive it to be right to make savings from his little means as a provision for a future day. When entreated to be less generous to others and spare something for himself, he replied, that he had not been convinced that he should do more good by that means than by spending now. In the same spirit was his saying, formerly quoted,—My parish first, then my family. It was a pleasure to him sometimes to invite to his table some of the humble and poor, and share their gratification. I will not ask, he would say, those whom Mr A. or Mr B. might invite; they do not need my dinner; I will have those whom nobody invites. He pleased himself with getting out for these humble guests some choice wine which had been given him; and when reminded that they would not know the difference between that and what was inferior, he replied, But I do.

During the night of the great fire in 1814, and in the midst of the consternation of that awful season, as he was walking with a friend, they met a lady retreating from the conflagration of her home. His friend immediately offered her an asylum. No, no, said he; she has friends, let her go to them; reserve your room for those who have none.

One remarkable cold Sunday, when the snow was driving violently before the wind and few persons were able to reach the church, he laid aside the usual formal discourse, and taking up the words, "Who can stand before his cold?" addressed to his hearers some striking extemporaneous remarks suggested by the season;* which he closed with recommending, that, instead of coming to church in the afternoon, they should serve their great Benefactor by visiting and helping the suffering poor. He himself set the example by going out in the face of the storm, to visit a poor solitary woman at a distance from town.

At another time, having passed a restless night, when he could ill sleep for thinking of those whom he knew to be suffering from the severity of the season, he rose at an early hour to go and take care for them. Returning late, he observed, with an air of great contentment, that such and such persons had got good fires, and such and such good breakfasts; and now, said he, we will have ours.

Anecdotes like these might be multiplied. They indicate the spirit of his life, — a habit of disinterested thoughtfulness for others.

These qualities of integrity and disinterestedness, as they have been described, received steadfastness, consistency and strength from the more peculiarly religious graces of faith and piety, which in him were always living and operating. The power of his religious convictions, their con-

* He was very fond of using occasions and seasons, and was happy in adapting himself to them. I may mention another instance. Having prepared for his vestry evening lecture on one occasion, he was called to the dying bed of a parishioner. He was present during the last struggle of life, and went directly thence to the lecture room, where he put aside the preparation he had made, and took the text, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." It is said that he was never more impressive.

stant presence to his consciousness, coloring the thoughts which passed through his mind, the feelings which rose in his heart, the desires, wishes, purposes and plans of his whole being, was evident to all who were about him, and is strikingly displayed in his letters to his friends. They are the letters of a religious mind ; not formally and professedly discussing religious topics, excepting on special occasions ; but full of those incidental expressions and allusions which disclose unawares the habit and bias of the mind. They show that a thoughtful regard to the divine presence, an unreserved trust in Providence, an habitual reference to the highest principles and motives, and a sensibility to spiritual things as if visible realities, were a part of his very life, and accompanied him like the life-blood of his body. They gave him the fortitude with which he bore the sufferings of his long disorder, and the cheerful equanimity with which he waited its trying vicissitudes, its certain progress and its final approach toward death. It all illustrated his faith and proved the power of his principles.

Such a man as this could not fail of leaving an impression on the society in which he labored. When God qualifies one of his servants with such gifts, and they are faithfully used, he certainly crowns them with a blessing. And I trust that I have explained, as I proposed, the secret of his efficiency by the description which I have attempted of his preaching, his pastoral life, his system of action, and his personal character. Take them all together, observe how each operated by itself, and then how they all wrought in conjunction, and there can be no mistake as to the causes of his success, so far as he was himself concerned. And I cannot conclude this survey better, than by saying, in the words of a friend who has written to me respecting

him, that the contemplation of his example "may be as profitable for his brethren, as it would be for an agriculturist to visit a spot where he could see the best improvements in the cultivation of the soil carried into effect." It is for his brethren, especially for beginners in the ministry, that I have felt myself to be writing. No men are so likely to enter life with general and undefined purposes of usefulness as clergymen. No profession offers so vague a map of duty, and allows so wide a choice of means and measures, so extensive a range between activity and indolence. None, therefore, so much need specific direction from the experienced, and, what is yet better, some pattern of a well arranged and efficient administration. Such a pattern may be found here. Let our young men study it; let them enter thoughtfully into its spirit; let them tread devotedly and discreetly its paths; not slavishly, not minutely, but in the becoming temper of free minds, which own Christ for the only Master, but which yet love to learn of, and imitate those who have worthily served him. They may then hope for satisfaction in their work, for they will see it prosper; and the church will rejoice in the brighter day of activity, piety and peace, which will be growing up beneath their toil.

We must now turn our attention to his more public relations. At the time of his ordination, the division which has rent in twain the Congregational body of New England, had not been made. Ministers and churches held fellowship with each other on the broad ground of their common Christianity, and had not learned to refuse it on the narrow ground of their peculiar interpretations of some parts of Christianity. But the signs of the coming

division had begun to show themselves ; voices were already heard clamoring for it, and suspicion and hesitancy, were beginning to mark the conduct of leading men. The two Congregational churches in Portsmouth had from time immemorial dwelt side by side in the interchange of the offices of Christian fellowship, though the standard of orthodoxy had been higher in the one than in the other. Dr Buckminster was now minister of the North Parish, a distinguished and respected name, exercising deserved influence over a large and flourishing congregation. Though aware of the extent in which Mr Parker's opinions fell short of what he himself regarded as sound theology, he soon formed for him an affectionate attachment, and united with him in Christian and ministerial offices. They lived like father and son, mutually respecting and aiding each other. It was a beautiful instance of two disciples merging their differences in their love for a common Master and for one another. In the infirmities which soon came upon the declining years of the elder, the younger was a trusted and confidential companion ; and in the perplexities which attended the early ministry of the younger, the elder was a ready counsellor and aid. And when a zealous person, who doubted whether her new minister were sufficiently orthodox, inquired of Dr Buckminster whether she ought not to forsake his ministry, he charged her not to do so, for that any one who should listen aright to Mr Parker, would find the way of salvation.

Dr Buckminster died in 1812 ; Mr Parker preached the sermon at his funeral ; and in 1815 gave the right hand of fellowship at the ordination of his successor, the Rev. Israel W. Putnam. The customary intercourse continued between the ministers, notwithstanding that the growing

controversies were producing and increasing the ruptures of ancient fellowship in every part of the country, until the year 1819. In the course of this year, Dr Parker joined in the ordination of Mr Sparks in Baltimore. This was seized upon as the occasion for suspending ministerial intercourse with him, and from that time he and his church were treated as heretic and excommunicate. Of course so important a change in the religious relations of two neighboring communities, — from ancient fellowship to sudden alienation, from mutual offices of faith and love, to anathema on the one part, and a sense of wrong on the other, — could not take place without the excitement of a good deal of feeling. Dr Parker did not affect insensibility. It was a serious change in his own situation, as it abridged his opportunities of religious intercourse. But it altogether failed of affecting his influence as a minister, or of retarding the prosperity of his congregation. Though denounced as unworthy the countenance of the Christian community, and separated from the Church universal as far as human power could separate it, it yet continued to advance in numbers and repute. Not by raising the banner of controversial war, and hurling back anathemas; but by carrying into more vigorous action, those fundamental truths and practical principles which they had contended for as the common ground of Christianity. The adherence to these, in the spirit of love and good works, was every year more and more blest. Those that were of the contrary part, were ashamed, having no evil thing to say of them; and many even of the congregation which had disowned them, became convinced that God was with them, and joined their fellowship; so that it was pithily said, "Individuals and families continue to migrate from the North, in hopes of

finding a more congenial climate at the South." This climate they found; and there was evidence that beneath its benignant influences souls were ripening rapidly for heaven.

It is no small trial to the spirit, even in a land where the church has no secular power to enforce its decrees, to be stigmatized by a dominant party as an enemy to the Saviour, and have one's name cast out as evil. But where the trial is borne with meekness and faith, it tends to purify and elevate the character, to confirm the allegiance to conscience, and to strengthen attachment to the holy truth for whose sake the obloquy is endured. Dr Parker bore it thus, and there can be no doubt that he shared a blessing in the result. One of his friends remarked to me, that he thought he had perceived an evident progress, from this time, in the higher attributes of his Christian life. He seemed to feel a new responsibility when he found himself bearing the burden of a despised and rejected faith. He searched with new diligence into its foundations, he received new convictions of its power and worth, pressed it more closely to his bosom, and exerted himself with new watchfulness in its defence. Not, as I have already said, by contending, but by seeing to it, that, on himself and on those committed to his charge, it was permitted to exert its legitimate influences, and thus vindicate its divine power. When he attributed the increase of the parish, in his discourse on occasion of removing from the old meeting-house, "principally to the liberality of its members and their peaceable spirit," he uttered what was true, but not the whole truth. It was still more owing to the care which its minister took to maintain that peaceable spirit, and to make the truth lovely by its visible effects.

The consequence of this prosperity was the erection of a more spacious place of worship, which was dedicated in February, 1826. Many persons at the time expressed an apprehension that the building was too large, and never could be filled with worshipers. But the event proved otherwise. It soon appeared that many souls were desiring precisely such an administration as was there offered them, and before his death it was completely occupied. He found himself in the spiritual charge of more than two hundred and ten families where he had begun with seventy.

We may advert in a few words to another change in his relations, occasioned by the circumstances of the times. In his early ministry, he had united himself to the Piscataqua Association of Ministers, and used to attend its pleasant meetings in company with Dr Buckminster, who was observed "to go with more alacrity and increased spirits to the ministers' meetings, ordinations, &c. when his young friend could be his companion in the chaise." It might have been reasonably expected, that that Association would stand up manfully for religious liberty, and be slow to admit the exclusive doctrines of the day; for in the year 1790 it had adopted and recommended to the churches the following liberal sentiment:—"That the profession which churches have a right to demand, is not an assent to any human creed, confession, or summary of Christian doctrine; but a general profession of faith in Christ, repentance of sin, and hope of the mercy of God through him, expressed either in words or writing, as the person offering himself may choose." But the enlarged spirit which had dictated this expression, seems to have departed with the good men of that milder day. Their successors became alarmed at the progress of liberty, and it was unavoidable that they

should so conduct themselves toward a member of their body whom they knew to favor the heresies of the times, as to make him perceive that his presence at their meetings was irksome to them; and thus, without venturing on the obnoxious measure of a formal exclusion, to induce him voluntarily to withdraw.

But while thus cut off from the Christian fellowship of those of his own denomination who fancied themselves sounder divines than he, it is pleasant to know that there were others, not of the same denomination nor consenting to his distinguishing views, who yet lived with him on terms of cordial respect and affection. The clergyman of the Episcopal Church in Portsmouth could not be alienated from a good man by the cry of heresy or any speculative differences of opinion. He treated Dr Parker as a brother, and there was between them a sincere and confiding attachment which only death interrupted. During the severity of Dr Parker's illness, when the approach of the cholera was apprehended at Portsmouth, a united season of fasting and prayer was held by the congregations of these two ministers; the services being conducted by Dr Burroughs at his own church in the morning, and at the South Congregational church in the afternoon. That occasion is remembered with deep feelings of satisfaction. It is gratifying to record this instance of a true Christian spirit manifested by good men, each conscientiously devoted to his own views, but able to look above them to the wider fields of truth and love.

There was still another body of clerical men, with whom he was connected by virtue of his office as a Congregational minister, — viz. the Convention of Congregational Ministers in New Hampshire. This from its very constitution, em-

bracing, as it did, all the Congregational ministers in the State, was based on the broadest principles of Congregationalism; and therefore the excluding spirit of the times ought to have found no harbor within it. But it did not escape the general infection. For several years, consequently, Dr Parker had absented himself from its meetings, and thus was totally cut off from all participation with former associates in the public fellowship of Christian life. But it happened, that one of the last public acts of his life was connected with this very body of ministers. When his sinking health revived a little a few months before his death, he made a journey of recreation, and in the course of it visited Concord. It was at the period of the anniversary celebrations, and as he saw from the window of his lodging the ministers repairing to the meeting of the Convention, he took up his hat, and said that he would step in once more and see what they were doing. He found them engaged in a project for remodelling the Convention, and excluding from it the Unitarian members. He was struck with the impropriety of the scheme, and its inconsistency with genuine Congregational principles, and rose in his place to expose it. It was almost a voice from the dead, and could hardly have been more solemn if it had issued from the sepulchre.

But while the disorders of the age deprived him of the fellowship of those with whom he began life in more tranquil days, he had the satisfaction of seeing gathered near him a number of ministers with whom he could more fully sympathise. A new Association was formed in the spirit of brotherly love and mutual forbearance and aid. In this connexion he enjoyed fully the communion of the saints, and was himself regarded as a member, whose light

and counsel were always ready and always valuable. He joined also, in the latter part of his life, in forming the Unitarian Association of New Hampshire, and lent to it the power of his name and influence by consenting to be its first President. He was still as far as ever from all mere sectarianism: but he saw what the times demanded, and he probably, as his bodily strength decayed and another world drew near, felt with increasing force the worth of those great principles on which his own trust and consolation rested.

Less of a sectarian no man could be, and yet no man was more decidedly attached to the opinions which he had embraced. I am not aware that there was any great peculiarity of sentiment by which he was distinguished from the great body of Unitarians; though in a community whose members are so wholly independent of each other, and make so little account of minor differences of faith, it is not easy to speak on this point with certainty. To their leading and favorite principles, he was an independent practical adherent;—he allowed perfect liberty of judgment and profession to all, and was willing to join all of any name in the promotion of a good cause. He cared for the prevalence of no doctrine, if it did not make men better Christians. His own words are these: “Believing as I do, that religion is designed to make men good, I can rejoice in the success of no party any further than its success is connected with the advancement of piety. Wherever I see the spirit of the gospel cherished and extended, I will rejoice, whatever sect may be employed in the work of doing good.” Perfectly agreeable to this are certain principles, which he says he had prescribed to himself: “To unite with good men in doing good,—to endeavor to weaken no man’s influence who

appeared to be laboring in the cause of Christ,—not to multiply occasions of strife between Christians of different views,—to do all in his power to cherish kind affections among Christians,—to defend his character when any attempt should be made to cover it with suspicion, and this, as a means of preserving his usefulness in the world.”

While he thus jealously watched for liberty and charity, his favorite and engrossing views were the practical views of religion. These, as was hinted when I spoke of his preaching, were severe, solemn and strict, grounded on uncompromising views of the divine law, and on the gospel as a provision for sinners. His thoughts and representations of religion took their tone from this idea ; and he had serious apprehensions of evil from what he supposed to be the tendency of the times to a lax and lenient administration of truth,—intellectual, refined, graceful, tasteful and rhetorical, but not profound, earnest, spiritual. The controversies and divisions of the day on the one hand, aided by the increasing refinement of society on the other, seemed to him tending to this melancholy result,—to deprive the gospel of its nerve, and make preaching a holiday entertainment. “I cannot but entertain fears,” he said, “that the public taste in our parishes is becoming too fastidious, too fond of mere novelties ; of amusement in listening to preaching, rather than improvement. If it be so, our churches will decay, and the situation of clergymen become more and more deplorable. There can be no situation more humiliating, than that of a minister who feels obliged to cater for a fastidious taste, who perceives that his standing with his people is made to depend upon amusing their fancy, not upon honest endeavors to save their souls.”

In another passage he uttered forebodings on this sub-

ject which have since begun to be extensively verified. "These are bad times for ministers. The whole moral atmosphere is in an unnatural state of commotion; the public taste is becoming more and more diseased. The time will come when brighter hopes will open on the church. I may not live to see them, but I will enjoy them in anticipation. In the mean time, ministers must feel and suffer the agitations which are going on, and which they have had a great hand in producing. They must labor, be reviled, be tossed from place to place, not knowing where they shall lay their heads,—if peradventure they can keep them sufficiently composed to lay them for temporary repose any where. But great results are to be the fruit of severe labors and trials. We have no right either to complain or to despond. Duty is our's; events are God's."

He had great faith in the power as well as in the truth of his religious views. He was sure, as he well might be from his own experience, that they contain the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation. But he did not conceal his anxiety lest the causes which have been just referred to, and others of a less definable character, should cause a want of simplicity and earnestness in preaching them. Upon this point he was accustomed to express himself strongly. "No sect can preserve its hold upon the public, which does not bring religion to the hearts of men, and connect itself strongly with their affections. No permanent bond of union can be formed between a people and a minister, unless it be strengthened by a deep conviction that the minister either does them good, or earnestly labors for their good, as moral, religious, accountable, and immortal beings." He rejoiced heartily in all the measures that were taken for increasing the

means of theological education. "We are in extreme want," he says, when writing on the subject, "of exertions to raise up rational preachers of the gospel." Ordinary, ill-appointed, half-educated men, he looked upon as a serious impediment to the cause of truth, — feeling, as he once expressed himself in relation to a place in which he was interested, "If there must be a dunce or a drone at ***, I prefer that he should be on the other side." When he saw in a minister, anything of the *petit-maitre* and the selfish, he expressed himself in terms of still greater impatience. Not Cowper himself could exhibit a stronger abhorrence and contempt of such a character. If one had appeared to enter the ministry for the sake of its worldly respectability and ease, if he were mainly anxious to secure a reputation, if he seemed to be engaged in turning sentences and contriving prettinesses, instead of dealing with plain and strong truths, he did not disguise how much he was annoyed. He would urge the young men who occasionally preached for him, to discard all thought of what would be said of them, and all sensitive anxiety about the merit of their discourses. Why do you not write a sermon, he would sometimes ask, as you write a letter? — throw out your soul freely and warmly, without thinking of anything else. "We must diminish our pride," he writes to a friend, "or rather, we must make our duty our rule, and obey its commands. Then we shall be satisfied with doing as well as we can, without bringing ourselves into comparison with others."

His own practice in this respect was in accordance with his principles. I have brought my mind, he used to say, to be satisfied with doing the best I can. He studied to find his reward in this, and to repress all feverish solicitude

about consequences and reputation. He was very reluctant to receive commendation of his preaching, and he thought it of ill effect to hearers to be in the habit of giving it. One said to him, that a recent sermon was very good, and he trusted had done him good. It is of no consequence, he replied, that I should know you think it was a good one, and not at all worth while for you to express a hope that it will do you good. Never allow yourself to waste your feelings on expressions of this sort, but go quietly home and take care that it shall actually do you good.

In 1815, he married Miss Susan Pickering, daughter of the Chief Justice of New Hampshire, who, with one son, survives him. Their only other child died in early infancy. His habits and tastes fitted him peculiarly to enjoy and adorn domestic life. The strength of his affections, and his love of simple pleasures, imparted a zest to the tranquil delights of home, and being himself always cheerful and happy, he cast a perpetual sunshine upon all within his dwelling. Having but one child, he enlarged his circle of love and usefulness by extending a father's care to two children of his wife's sister, whom he reared as his own. In education he acted on the principle, that every one should be thrown upon his resources as much as possible, and made to depend on his own strength. Young persons should not be spared, but made to toil hard; one cannot learn to lay a stone wall, he would say, by piling up feathers. Not that he would refuse any reasonable aid; and it may be serviceable to others to mention a method, which he occasionally adopted, of giving useful advice and suggestions respecting temper and conduct; namely, by writing on a bit of paper some maxim or precept or

moral remark, and laying it silently where it might be found by the person whom he desired to influence.

The degree of doctor in divinity was conferred upon him by Bowdoin College in the year 1820. He delivered the Dudleian Lecture at Harvard University, in 1824.

About the year 1821, he began to be sensible to a difficulty in the upper part of his nostrils, which troubled his breathing and gave a little impediment to his speech. For some time it was but a slight inconvenience ; but it gradually increased till it became the occasion of severe suffering, and threatened to put a stop to his power of public speaking. He was obliged to submit himself to the instruments of the surgeon, and undergo the painful process of having the polypus, which had grown up in that tender region, forcibly torn away. The annoyance was removed only to grow again, and it became necessary to repeat the operation again, and again ; until at length it was frequently a part of his preparation for the pulpit to "resort to the tormentors," as he expressed it, and violently to clear out "his offending member." Unwilling to trouble another with so disagreeable a task, he learned to ply the instruments with his own hand ; he kept them by him in his study, and inflicted on himself the bloody torture whenever the progress of the disease called for it. Of course his general health was affected by sympathy with this local disorder.

He was early aware of the dangerous tendency of his disease. He looked, however, to its effect rather on his power of usefulness, than on the duration of his life. In August, 1829, he says in reply to the inquiry of a friend, "I have indeed felt at times oppressed by the calamity which I am called to endure. I have found it to be afflictive, not so much on account of the actual pains, which it

has occasioned me, as on account of the paralytic influence which it has exerted over all my faculties, oppressing me with the consciousness that I am poorly able to perform the duties of a responsible station, — one in which much good might be done. But my people are kind and charitable toward me, and I bless God for it ; but I cannot but feel at times as if I ought to give place to a more efficient man. My duty in this thing is not quite plain to me ; and this is oppressive ; yet I feel no disposition to complain, and I hope that I do what I can to be useful." And then, after remarking that he has that day gained relief " by submitting to have his offending member pass through the hands of the surgeons," he adds, — " Health I do not expect ; comfortable existence I may, I trust, hope for, without either guilt or presumption."

In June of the next year, 1830, he left home for the benefit of his health, and visited the springs at Saratoga. He did not much enjoy travelling, and was ill at ease in places of public resort. " I try all I can," he says, " to think it good for me to be here ; but I have often enjoyed more pleasure in visiting a poor widow for half an hour, than I have received from all the novelties here. I do not intend," he adds, " to visit every battle ground in my way. I hope to have my attention awake to whatever expresses the goodness or the grandeur of God ; the marring and polluting of his works by human passions and strife, I cannot be anxious to note."

During this excursion he made a brief visit at Worcester, where he had resided during the period of his preparation for the ministry. The changes which nearly thirty years had made, affected him. " I notice some," he says, " who were kind to me when I commenced my active life, and

their dispositions are unchanged. Many, indeed, are gone beyond my ken, and I have passed my boyish days; but yet I see in the richness of nature's scenes, in the coming forward of new actors, in the general improvement of the aspect of things, and the appearance of happiness, that, though change is going on, God is not ceasing to be good, and that I have abundant cause to trust in him and to rejoice in him."

He derived little or no benefit from the journey. "My health, I think, is no better. Had I not been heretofore mistaken in my prophecies, I should think that this disease would soon terminate my labors as a minister. This is the care of God, and with him I cheerfully leave it." His life had now become one long disease. At times he enjoyed comparative relief, maintained at all times his cheerful appearance and manner, and attended to the duties of his office. But he perceived himself to be a broken and decaying man. "I hope I do not complain of my trial," he writes in March, 1831, "though I am often painfully reminded, that I occupy a place which ought to be filled by an active, vigorous mind, not by one that is drowsy and paralytic; but I trust in God that I shall not be permitted to hang heavily upon my friends, or to injure a good cause; that I shall know my duties, and have grace to perform them."

In the succeeding October he wrote as follows:

"For myself, though I am never accustomed to think that all things are against me, the few months past have not been to me without a due portion of trials. My health has not been good, often wretched; yet I have been enabled to pass, though heavily, through my accustomed routine of duty. I have never been so sensible of the op-

pressiveness of duty ; and many a time I have sighed to be relieved of all public responsibilities, and to find in some retired spot a place where with books, rural occupations, and such friends as might feel interested in my welfare, I might pass quietly my destined period here. But such a spot is not within my reach, and I doubt not that it is best that it should be so. I am blest with a most affectionate people, who seem not yet wearied with me. They might be greatly improved, but to me they seem to constitute one of the best of parishes. They are fast falling away from me ; but as they sink into the grave they increase my confidence in the religion which it is my privilege to preach, and connect my affections more strongly with God and the future. Among those, who yet stand around me, I am rejoiced to notice a grateful attention to the one thing needful. In no year of my ministry have so many been added to the church as during the present ; yet there is no feverish state of feeling, all is calm and considerate. At present my health is better than usual, and I have the prospect of passing a comfortable winter. You will say I ought to be happy, and so I trust I am."

In the spring of 1832, his disorder took a new turn, extending itself to the lungs and threatening serious disease in that organ. He was obliged to relinquish preaching, and in August he visited the Isle of Shoals for the benefit of the air and retirement. Secluded and barren as was this retreat, he found it not destitute of hints for devout thought. "The islands are indeed desolate," he writes, "but even here God is not leaving himself without witnesses of his goodness. * * He who is spreading so widely his goodness, is appointing my trial ; it must therefore be for good." The thought of the kindness of his friends mingled with

his sense of the goodness of God while he mused and prayed in that lonely retirement, and strongly affected him. "The recollection of the many and persevering kindnesses of my friends, though it is precious to me, often entirely overcomes me." And again, in another letter; "My friends have been abundant in their kindness, and among them you are entitled to more thanks than I can express; thanks, not merely for the wishes expressed for my personal welfare, during a season of trials, but for years of most exemplary assistance in promoting the spiritual interests of my people, which are far more dear to me than the poor remnants of a life which at furthest must soon close. I beg you to remember me most affectionately to all my friends, and to assure them that I am not insensible to their kindness. While I think of their goodness to me, I cannot but carry up my thoughts to the Inspirer of all goodness. He has been very merciful to me; and I cannot be too thankful that he has preserved my mind from gloomy distrust, and kept cheerful images before it. I cheerfully commit all to him; myself, my dear friends, all, I commit to him."

After returning from the Isle of Shoals, he visited Boston for the purpose of consulting the distinguished physicians of that city, and returned home somewhat encouraged respecting the prospect of continued life. It was at this time that he wrote to a friend in the following strain. "The prospect that my disease will soon come to a fatal issue, I do not consider so certain as I once did. It seems to me more probable, that I may be called to pass years of infirmity and uselessness; and I must confess that the anticipation is far more painful to me than that of a speedy death. But I will not distrust that merciful Being who has hitherto

sustained me, nor the consolations which are in Christ Jesus. In my sickness I have been wonderfully supported; my mind has been preserved in great serenity, and my religious trust has not been for a moment shaken. Though there is at times a degree of fearfulness, when I look forward to the future trials which may await me, yet I am not cast down in the anticipation of them, but stay myself on the promises of God and submit myself to his disposal. All will be well I doubt not."

At this time, many of his friends were urgent that he should try the effect of a warmer climate, and begged permission to bear the expenses of his winter's residence in Cuba. But he said, "I cannot be convinced that it is my duty to leave home; and at the risk of being thought unreasonable and obstinate, I shall remain among my friends." He accordingly passed the season in Portsmouth, but in such a state of weakness that in March he writes, "I have been into the street but twice since the middle of December, and then only to take a short ride." In May he speaks of his health as "surprisingly and unexpectedly improved;" and for a few Sundays he was able to preach; but it was a transient revival. The summer passed away and he gained nothing; and in September he writes, "It seems to me that I have not long to remain here; and I have a perfect confidence that I shall not be deserted; that all things will be well." This was the last letter which he wrote.

It was now for many months that he had been unable to discharge any public duty, excepting a few days in the spring, and that others had taken his place in the pulpit. To live useless had always been his dread; a burden to his friends and parish he had always resolved not to be. During therefore this long trial of languor and helplessness, his

feelings had been exercised with no light struggle on the question whether he ought not to resign his ministry, and relieve his flock from the burden of his support. He felt that they could not bear the expense of two ministers, and he was unwilling to stand in the way of their obtaining a pastor with the health and efficiency which he had lost. The parish, on the other hand, clinging to him with devoted gratitude and respect, could not think of a separation so long as his life should remain. They were anxious to give him every indulgence in their power, and to make that provision which should set his mind at ease. With this view they determined to provide a colleague who might divide with him the labors of the ministry; and having been so happy as to secure the services of Mr Andrew P. Peabody, the twentyfourth day of October was appointed for his ordination. But the days of the sufferer were numbered, and in vain did gratitude, friendship and piety prepare this alleviation for his cares. He lived to see the day which gave him a colleague; he saw the people that he loved, united under the charge of one whom they could trust; but as if the heart, which for twentyfive years had beat only in their service, could beat no longer when that service was thought to be no longer needed, he rapidly declined from this time; a new disease set in, and the hour of his departure drew nigh.

For many days there was nothing alarming in the affection from which he suffered, and it was supposed that his constitution would rally again as it had done before. But on the morning of Wednesday, November sixth, he intimated to his physician that he felt his end approaching, and every hour rendered it more evident. In the midst of great suffering, so great that he spoke of it as "intense

agony," he made the few necessary arrangements of his worldly affairs, and continued from this time, without relief from bodily distress, but in great quietness and even cheerfulness of spirit, until two o'clock, Friday morning, when he ceased to breathe.

It would be easy to say much respecting the manner in which he had borne the long trial of his disease, and of the state and expression of his mind in the near approach of death. It was all worthy of the religion which he had preached, and a testimony to its power. It was all, at the same time, in perfect accordance with his own character; so that the same traits displayed themselves during debility and suffering, which had marked him in health and action. What was observed of him by a friend who was with him during the last few days of his life, was true of his whole illness: "all was natural, all was himself, his every-day self, yet there was a dignity and solemnity which was *felt*, if it was not seen by the common eye." This was in perfect accordance with the principles which had always governed him. He once said, when asked what he should do, if he were certain of dying in three or four days,—“Just what I am doing now and intend to do tomorrow.” And it was remarked by a friend, who saw him much during the days when he was actually waiting for death, that he was still doing the ordinary duty of every hour as it arrived, and interesting himself in the immediate gratification of his friends, as he would have done if sure of a long life. But of formal declarations respecting his state of mind and feelings, he had as little now as when in health. What he said was incidental, “so that it is only by retracing general conversations, that anything can be recalled.” His soul betrayed itself in the demeanor rather than by the

lips. When, however, some of his friends, with the desire, so natural to us, to learn from one's own testimony what is passing within, spoke to him on the subject, he answered them with his own frankness. About a week before his death, when several were sitting by him, one of them asked him whether he experienced the power of his faith as he had expected to do. He answered with emphasis, "I trust that I do." And in further conversation, though speaking with the greatest difficulty, he expressed the undisturbed serenity of mind which he enjoyed and the confidence of his religious hope; adding, that if it were ever clouded for a moment, he had but to remind himself of the goodness of God, and all was bright again. He often said to one of his friends, I have never felt myself forsaken for a moment, and I have no fear that I shall not be supported to the last. Any attempt to give him support by words of commendation he could ill bear. It was natural that his friends, in their desire to express what they felt toward him to whom they owed so much, should sometimes use strong language. He listened to it very impatiently, saying, Do not call me good, I know my imperfections as no one else can. When it was replied, that he ought not to depreciate himself, he answered, that he certainly did not intend to do that; that he had the comfort of believing he had done some good; he thanked God for it; and desired that the glory might be given to Him. With the same mixture of honesty and humility, he replied to the remark, that he had always endeavored to promote the happiness of those around him, "So far as I have had *distinct purposes*, it may be so."

Some idea of the manner in which he endured his sufferings, may be derived from the following extract of a letter.

"I have often been with Dr Parker when he was suffering the severest distress — and though it was almost beyond endurance even to be with him, and witness his distress, he nevertheless remained as calm and cheerful as though nothing whatever was the matter. If anything was said, he would always, even while coughing so that it seemed almost as if his lungs must be torn in pieces, endeavor to put in a remark, though it might be only a word between each breath ; and when too much exhausted for utterance, he would still turn upon you with a most sweet smile.

"I never saw him cast down but once — and that was the first Sunday in the year, a day which had always been one of unusual interest to him, on account of the review which he had been accustomed to make on that day of the concerns of the church and parish of the preceding year, and the opportunity it afforded him of appealing forcibly to the consciences of his people, and producing a religious impression. It was the first time since his settlement, that he had been deprived of the privilege of addressing his people on this occasion, and he felt it very sensibly. I went in to see him after the afternoon service, and was struck with the appearance of sadness on his countenance. I had been often before urging him to allow his friends to sit up with him at night — and I introduced the subject again. After I had pressed the matter considerably, setting aside all his objections, he at last came out with what I doubt not was that which weighed most deeply on his mind — 'He did not think it right to make other people suffer on his account.' 'Why, sir,' said I, 'your people would rejoice to be permitted the privilege of sitting with you ; and if you will only give the word, I venture to say there are fifty who stand ready to offer tonight.' His heart was already

full; but the remembrance of his people's love was too much for him, and he leaned his face on his hand and wept. — Excuse me, my dear sir, for running out to this length — but it is a subject on which those who have seen much of Dr Parker are not apt to say only a word or two.”*

In this manner did he pass through his wearisome disease, and thus in faith and patience did he meet the hour of dissolution. He had lived as a Christian should live, and he died as a Christian should die. Devout men attended him to his burial and made great lamentation over him. His body lies in that retired and beautiful spot, which he had lately done much to cause to be consecrated as a place of sepulture, and thither many have gone to ponder and weep, while they rejoiced in the lofty trust and glad faith, which assured them that his spirit was among the blessed. A durable monument of stone has been erected to tell the place where his dust reposes; but a better memorial is to be found in the volume which contains the records of his teaching. Better than epitaph or eulogy it will describe him to those who knew him not, and will restore him to the memory and heart of those who knew and loved him.

* Other particulars are recorded in the *Address to the pupils of the South Parish Sunday School* the Sabbath after his interment; and in the *Memoirs* of his life published in the *Christian Examiner*, March, 1834, and in the *Collections of the New Hampshire Historical Society*, volume iv.—It will be observed that in no instances have I enclosed in quotation marks the language attributed to Dr Parker, excepting I was sure of the *very words*. Most of the citations are from his letters.

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS ON VARIOUS OCCASIONS.

AUGUST 6, 1817.

WHEN you were a member of my parish, it was my consolation, when reflecting, that my personal exertions as a preacher, could do you little good, that you were capable of instructing yourself, and that your future happiness was not suspended upon my feeble exertions. In this reflection I always rejoice, when I consider, that I am called to be the instructor of many who are capable of teaching me. Indeed I have sometimes thought, that when, in the public services of the Sabbath, the intellect and imagination were constantly obliged to exert all their power, and were always gratified, improvement in piety was not so certain, as when the mind and heart by a humbler effort of the preacher, were employed in personal inspection and application. In the one case, there cannot easily be made an impression, which will not be good; in the other, we may feel a great interest in public worship, and even imagine that religion claims our hearts, when we in fact attend upon the services of the preacher with the same kind of interest that we do upon exhibitions of eloquence or any other subject. These observations, I make not as an apology for my own sluggishness, or that of any other man; but to remind myself, that I am not of that vast importance which I might imagine, and you, that improvement in piety depends more, under the blessing of God, upon our own personal effort than upon the labors of others.

DECEMBER 8, 1819.

* * * I am fully aware, that I and all my endeavors to serve, as I think, the interests of religion and of my fellow men, are regarded by many with suspicion, if not with utter aversion. I hope that those who freely censure, have more to recommend them to God, and powers better prepared for usefulness, than I can claim. But I cannot but fear, that the great principle, which ought to characterize every Christian, as it does the religion of Jesus, is too little understood, and its practical influence too feebly felt by most Christians. General censure of any of the various sects, into which the church is divided, I am persuaded must be unjust as well as uncandid; for it will fall upon some, whom Christ has received, and whom he is honoring as instruments of usefulness.

I am very far from believing that every religious theory is equally operative in producing the fruits of holiness, or that it is a matter of small importance what religious sentiments we may adopt. But it is not for man to decide what degree of error is consistent with a sanctifying faith, and at what particular point the mixture of error with truth will destroy the influence of the latter and render the faith entirely useless. We have a vastly more important concern to occupy our attention. It ought to be our humble endeavor to avoid *all* error, and to search for the truth, as it is in Jesus. Even with our best efforts, it would be presumptuous to expect that our creed will in every respect be perfectly faultless. Perfect views on all religious subjects are reserved for that world, where is no darkness at all. While here, we must be contented upon many subjects, to which curiosity may direct our thoughts, to see through a glass darkly. The imperfection of our views may have a very important influence upon our moral discipline. It will serve, if regarded at it ought to be, to produce watchfulness, humility and candor. But, blessed be God, the most important practical truths are revealed with great plainness. I believe, and I rejoice in the conviction, that those

truths, which would come to a man's mind with the most powerful and benevolent influence, when lying upon the bed of death, with no one about him to remind him of the party contentions which exist in the church, are much more generally believed by all serious Christians, than many are inclined to suppose. Indeed, it appears to me, that the subjects which produce the greatest violence of passion, are rather subjects of philosophical speculation, than those, on which revelation is designed to enforce an authoritative decision. Whatever may be the truth of this last remark, I feel no doubt, but that that faith, whatever may be its *speculative* imperfections, which reconciles us to God, and infuses into our hearts the spirit of Jesus, is a saving faith, and that no other faith will enable us to overcome the world, acceptably to honor our Master, to *enjoy* the service to which he calls us, or give us peace in a dying hour.

But why should I write in this way? When I had the pleasure of ministering to you, I ever endeavored to be a helper of your joy, not a lord over your faith. For myself I feel a solemn responsibility in my inquiries for the truth, and what appears to me to be such, I inculcate, I hope with seriousness. But I wish every individual to feel his personal responsibility in this matter. Each one must answer for himself at the bar of Jesus Christ. What may be the opinion of my fellow Christians respecting me or those with whose religious speculations I most nearly agree, is not of very great importance. It is, I trust, my first wish and highest aim to preserve the friendship of God, and I feel truly thankful, that I do not consider it a duty to censure those severely, who think they do God service by denying to me the name of Christian. I thank God, that the people, among whom my lot is cast, view my humble services with kindness, and I pray, that I may be useful to them.

I am sorry that I had not the satisfaction of seeing you, when you were in town. There are many circumstances which my memory cherishes with pleasure, that connect

themselves very closely with the best affections of my heart. The scenes through which I have passed in your family, I can never recollect without strong emotions. Your expressions of affectionate remembrance bring them to my mind with all their power ; and it was not till after I had read your first letter many times, that tears ceased to fall fast upon the expressions of gratitude, which it contains. Indeed, expressions of gratitude, which arise from the impressions that I have ever been instrumental of contributing anything to the everlasting interests of a human soul overwhelmed me. But upon a subject so solemn I can express my feelings to God alone.

I know your tenderness of feeling, and your interest in religion. If latterly I have indulged any fears for your religious character, they have arisen from an apprehension, that you were in danger of cherishing views so gloomy and desponding, as to diminish the usefulness of your example as well as your personal efforts and happiness. But God is giving you abundant proof of his fatherly kindness, and the influence of Jesus, unless counteracted by unworthy views is at once purifying and cheerful. You, I trust, can say that he is precious to your soul, and I hope you will never think any path gloomy, which directs your footsteps toward heaven. May God guide and bless you and your dear children is the earnest prayer of. Your affectionate friend.

I am not troubled because you are exposed to numerous calls of pleasure and of duty. In a large city, however, I am aware, that the demands made by the world are pressing hard upon higher interests. But I trust you will know how to meet these demands in a way to make them contribute to your benefit, and to the good of those with whom you mingle in social pleasures. Some portion of time ought to be devoted to society. It does us good to break away occasionally from severer duties, and to devote an hour to the lighter scenes of life. We may thus make the world tributary to

our intellectual strength and activity; and may learn wisdom from its very follies. We may, after the season of relaxation, come back to our higher purposes and pursuits refreshed and invigorated. What is chiefly to be kept in view is, that our fixed purposes be well principled, and that nothing earthly be permitted to turn us away from them, or to render sluggish the kind and pious affections of the heart. If we form a taste for intellectual and religious pleasures, we shall have in our own bosoms a better protection from earthly seductions, than can be afforded by any specific rules whatever. As it respects religious charities, I trust you will ever feel a deep interest in them. They are indeed multiplied beyond reason, and there is much folly in the administration of them, as well as much pride, party spirit and ambition. But those charities which go directly to advance the public education, whether moral or intellectual, will not eventually be lost, though they may be rendered in a spirit which will bring no reward to the giver. I trust, that you will so guide your own affections and efforts, as to make your charitable deeds bless both yourself and those who are their immediate objects.

STATE OF THE TIMES.

MARCH 26, 1829.

I set myself down merely to make a few remarks upon the religious news of this place. You have heard how wonderfully we have prospered here in multiplying our clergymen and parishes; and may be desirous of knowing our condition and prospects. We have more teachers than are needed, or can be permanently supported. This will ultimately prove an evil. But the evil is not confined to this place. It has grown out of great excitement, and has extended through New England. The effect will be, that great animosities will for a time be excited, and when these subside, the clergymen of small parishes must be left to starve. In these evils I cannot rejoice. During the process that is now going on, there is and will be much that is evil, much that tends to

themselves very closely with the best affections of my heart. The scenes through which I have passed in your family, I can never recollect without strong emotions. Your expressions of affectionate remembrance bring them to my mind with all their power ; and it was not till after I had read your first letter many times, that tears ceased to fall fast upon the expressions of gratitude, which it contains. Indeed, expressions of gratitude, which arise from the impressions that I have ever been instrumental of contributing anything to the everlasting interests of a human soul overwhelmed me. But upon a subject so solemn I can express my feelings to God alone.

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seem to feel a new life, and they imagine, that now they have found the secret of being religious and happy. They go and join themselves with a new sect. It may be that they are not at all improved by the change, or if they are, that greater improvement might have been gained by an humble and diligent use of the means of grace which they have deserted. Their new teachers will soon become familiar, and their emotions will be less vivid. They must then try a new form, and thus pass round the circle of sects, and the wonder will be if in the whirl they do not lose all their piety. Here is one great cause of the success of proselytism.

RESPONSIBILITY.

JULY 29, 1829.

You tremble at the responsibility you are about to take upon yourself. Be not dismayed, my friend, at this. Our responsibilities are our glory. We ought to be willing to feel them, for they are the instruments which God employs for our purification and eternal bliss. It was never designed that we should reach heaven without effort and trial. You put your trust in God. You look to Jesus as your guide and Saviour. While you do this, you will find support. But you will not forget that you are to act as an instrument in the hand of God. Your business, therefore, is to discharge your duties faithfully, and to leave results to the disposal of God. It is a sickly sense of responsibility, which produces despondency, an impression that all depends upon us; whereas nothing depends upon us, but the performance of our duties. When we connect human pride with our responsibility, we may well be agitated by fear; when we lean upon God, we may rejoice always. And I am well convinced, that they who go to their duties with humility, will not only find support; but will discover, that all their success is so continually connected with God's providence, that they will find place only for gratitude, none for pride, even if every wish of their hearts should be gratified.

EDUCATION.

JANUARY 5, 1830.

The first care of a parent, as it seems to me, is to guard his own character. If he be able to maintain a deep feeling of the importance of religion, and pure and kind affections, he will teach by his example, and by every feature of his countenance. It is a great thing to have right views of the purposes of education, and then to adapt its principles to the subjects of it in a manner, suited to their different tempers and necessities. I doubt not, that you feel sufficient solicitude upon this subject. With you, caution may be necessary, that your sensibility be not too acute. In the mental and moral education extremes are to be avoided. Too much may be done, as well as too little. It seems to me that, in directing the moral and religious habits of children, care should be taken, that teaching be not excessive; that the proper seasons of instruction should be carefully noted and improved; that more may be expected from short hints of lessons given at the right time, than from long and tedious lectures periodically dispensed. The purpose is to guard the child from danger, and afford him assistance in using his own powers. When a child is of an age to learn to walk, it would be very injudicious always to carry him in arms. He must try his own powers, and while he is guarded from great dangers, he must be suffered to run the risk of an occasional fall. So it is in the moral and religious progress. A careful eye must watch against dangers; but the child must be allowed sufficient liberty to make experiments of his own. In this way he must acquire strength, and if the guardianship over him be careful and judicious, he will not fall into great errors.

BUCKMINSTER'S SERMONS, SECOND VOLUME.

JANUARY 14, 1830.

I have read the sermons of your lamented brother with great pleasure, and, I hope, with some profit. They give me a more perfect picture of his character as a parish min-

ister, than the first volume, and on this account are more interesting to me. They bring to me a mind rich in its powers, refined in its taste, abundant in its treasures, deeply imbued with the spirit of Jesus and devoted to the cause of man's salvation. The topics which are chosen are great topics, and they are treated as they ever ought to be, seriously and evangelically. The consciences and the hearts of men are addressed, while the intellect is nourished. The most refined cannot turn away from these sermons, because truth is presented in a homely dress, and I should pity them if they could leave the perusal of them without having their moral sensibilities touched, — with a disposition only to dwell upon the literary beauties, with which the taste is regaled and the imagination delighted. In a word, they seem to be admirably calculated to do good, to become instruments in saving sinners. They treat of the great interests of the soul, of its eternal destiny, with an earnestness which becomes a minister of Christ whose bosom is filled with an intelligent, active and benevolent zeal. The sermons which I regard as most excellent are the twelfth and eighteenth. But they are all good. If I should object to the principles laid down in any of them, it would be that on Providence. In no other one do I recollect a single sentiment in which I do not fully concur. The public have cause to be grateful to you for this interesting and useful volume. Indeed, I know not from what quarter so useful a volume could have been furnished, and I think that it would have been almost unjustifiable to have withheld it from publication. If the spirit of its author can know what influence this work is calculated to exert, and will exert, it must add to its joys even in Heaven.

MAY 30, 1831.

Since I saw you, it has been to you a season of severe and anxious trials, and of blessings and joys. You have experienced, as I have learned, the pressure of disease, and known what it is to see friends trembling and praying

around you for the preservation of your life. Such are seasons, when the strength of the religious faith is tried, and when its comforts are enjoyed. Such too are seasons, calculated to teach us what we are, and to give us new spiritual power by giving us a deeper feeling of the value of religious principles, and bringing them more fully into the heart. I trust you can now say, that it is good for you, that you have been afflicted; and that you are fully prepared by a cheerful devotion to your duties to show forth your gratitude to God.

You have had, too, the solitudes attending the anticipation of having a new charge committed to you, and are now a mother. God give you grace to regard the interesting little one entrusted to your care, not only with a mother's love, but with the affections of a Christian. You may find, in the duties and solitudes of a parent, the instruments of your own spiritual perfection. Regard your child as committed to you to educate for heaven. Be not anxious, except to perform your duties, and endeavor to place a proper confidence in God with regard to the results. I believe that I have before told you, that I consider the great business of parents to lie in the proper management of their own tempers, and the religious formation of their own characters. This being done, they are a perpetual and ever speaking lesson, full of persuasion to their children. I fear most for you, that you will feel too solicitous on this subject. Learn to do your duty and to trust in God.

You, I suppose, are with all others exposed to feel the melancholy influence of the spirit of strife, which is abroad in our churches. It seems to me to be a season of great moral danger, and what will be the result God only knows. But it is assigned us by Providence to meet these trials, and to prepare for heaven in the midst of them. We ought to regard and improve them, as we do other trials. They render it needful, that we guard our hearts and our faith with increased care. We may make them, whatever may be their general influence, contribute to our personal advancement, and ultimate good.

RELIGIOUS ADVICE.

JUNE 27, 1832.

I have not been so sick, as you seem to have supposed. My lungs were indeed severely affected, and the weather was most unpropitious ; which, together with the doctor, confined me to the house, for ten days, and prevented me from preaching for two sabbaths. I ought to be very thankful, that I have suffered so little. I was never before so long confined to the house ; and during my ministry I have before been prevented from preaching by sickness only for a single sabbath. I have preached for the last four sabbaths, though my lungs are yet quite sore. I cough a little, and am occasionally troubled with difficulty of breathing. Except this local affection, my health is quite as good as usual, and I doubt not I shall in a few weeks be entirely well.

The reference which you made to your religious feelings and condition awakened deep feelings. It is true, my friend, with respect to us all, that we are destined to struggle on amid difficulties and discouragements ; but I believe, that, if faithful, we may all hope to obtain an habitual confidence in God, serene and joyful anticipations of future happiness. I fear, that you do not enjoy the comforts of religion as you ought to do, and as you might do ; but it is my comfort, that God's decisions will be made, not according to your distressful views of yourself, but according to your real character. I am aware that the structure of your mind is one of peculiar delicacy and sensibility, and that there is much in the wintry atmosphere of the world to shock and distress you. But I feel a perfect assurance that the religion, which has the power of controlling and turning to good account the elements of common minds, has power also to render the highest endowments and the most exquisite sensibilities, the instruments of the highest good and of the purest happiness. There is in God all that can fill the soul, all that can reconcile it to passing scenes, all that can inspire the most glorious and joyful anticipations.

My theory of religion is one of the utmost simplicity. I believe Jesus when he says, with reference to the two great commandments of the law, — “ This do and thou shalt live.” It is to *produce love to God and love to man*, that Jesus lived on earth, taught, suffered and died. To this end all the principles and motives of his religion are directed. To accomplish this, is the purpose of our religious instructions, rites and prayers; and under the influence of Christian truth, all the discipline of Providence tends to the same end. When this effect is produced in us, we are prepared to rejoice evermore. In our intercourse with heaven all is cheerful and confiding. We are grateful and submissive, nothing doubting that the future will unfold views of increasing glory and joy to our souls. The mists of earth may occasionally interpose between us and God, but they will not long distress us, and our joys will be brightened by their temporary obscuration. Our connexion with our fellow men will animate our good affections, and though we may frequently be shocked by their vices, we shall never cease to cherish love for those who possess immortal natures, nor to labor for their exaltation and happiness. Giving the heart to God then, without reserve, is our first great duty. This done, all things will work together for our good. This done, we have the capacity for happiness, the spirit of Jesus, and our progress will be from glory to glory.

But how can a creature so imperfect and sinful as man hope for heaven? He could not and ought not, were he to *merit* heaven, were he to purchase happiness by his own deservings. All Christians admit this, yet I fear that many act under a very different persuasion, and are distressed. But we ought to believe with the *heart*, that eternal life is the gift of God. The purpose of Christianity is, to render us capable of enjoying this gift by imparting to us the spirit of Jesus, the spirit of happiness. This spirit being ours, we are saved. We do not readily receive this great truth; we do not readily give ourselves to God as a father; but go about purchasing heaven, as if its happiness were not a

free gift ; hence our distress and unhappiness. I recollect to have read, I know not where or when, a story, which illustrates the truth which I fear I have stated rather confusedly. A young lady was on a small island which afforded her no sustenance, and the sides of which were a continued precipice. She must perish if she remained there. She searched about for some place by which she might let herself down. A man appeared upon the beach with a countenance beaming with kindness, and assured her that there was no way by which she could escape but by throwing herself off, and that his arms should receive her ; that she need fear no danger, only trust in him, and she should be delivered. She feared to make the leap. He plead with her ; but still she feared and sought in every direction some different method of saving herself ; now making her way down the broken fragments of the rocks for some distance, and now trying to let herself down by some shrub, which sprung from the crevices ; but all was vain. Still she found no deliverance, and still the friend below was urging her with the utmost kindness to confide in him and leap into his arms. At length the resolve was made, she threw herself forward with a confiding heart, and found deliverance and joy. It is just this act of confidence in a Saviour and in God, which is necessary to us all, and it is just this which we too many of us refuse to perform.

You will cry out against me as a downright antinomian. No ; I abhor all forms and fashions of religion, which do not make the practical virtues necessary to salvation. But these virtues are not the *price*, by which salvation is to be purchased, they are the *evidence* that the soul is prepared to enjoy heaven. That these virtues may be maintained, the heart must be reached by the power of the gospel, it must be given to God. Then all will be peace and confidence, and hope and joy.

I did not mean to give you a lecture when I began to write ; but it is difficult to drop old habits. You will pardon me.

TO A FRIEND IN AFFLICTION.

JULY 11, 1832.

When I last wrote to you I feared for your sister; but my hope and prayer was that her valuable life might be spared. I have just learned that it has pleased God to remove her from you, and I most sincerely sympathize with you and * * * in your deep sorrow. It is indeed a most appalling affliction. You feel it to be such; but the loss is truly the heaviest to those little ones who have lost a mother, and who are incapable of estimating their loss. Children never have but one *mother*. Indeed, it is to me, one of the most mysterious dispensations of Providence, when a wife and mother, who has and deserves the love and confidence of her husband, and who is watching over her tender children with an enlightened Christian affection; whose influence is all good over their opening minds and hearts, is taken away from them by death. It would seem that the holiest affections pleaded for the continued influence of such a spirit over the dear circle of her love; that virtue and religion demanded, that she should not be removed; that her ministry could not be supplied; that infinite wisdom and love could not interpose to spread desolation over over such a scene by taking her away. But such mysteries are of frequent occurrence in the Providence of God. The infinite Father surely has a deeper interest than we can feel, in the intellectual and spiritual education of every child of his. He knows better than we do how to advance the purposes of his love. However dark and perplexing such providences are, as that which has overwhelmed you in sorrow, we cannot doubt, that they are ordained in wisdom and love. We must not permit our confidence in heaven to be shaken; but in humble trust must commit ourselves to God, not doubting that in the onward progress of our being the darkness will be dispersed, and that the tearful passages of life will be looked back upon as displaying

the highest regard to our welfare by our unwearied, ever watchful guardian.

With the sources of religious consolation which are open to you, you are familiar. You have had frequent occasions to resort to them, and I trust you can say, that you have found them abundant, and that you are now prepared to resort to them with undoubting confidence. I prize not at all the set forms of condolence, which kindness sometimes adopts. It seems to me that to the truly afflicted they are powerless, and oppressive. In my afflictions I would hold confiding communion with God. I would have by me, could I command such a blessing, a friend who would know how to sympathize with me; who would sit by me; but would then only speak, when by an intuitive feeling he could perceive, that he could connect the broken thoughts which were tossing in my bosom, or guide my sighs to heaven. But after all, how little can friendship do in such seasons of the soul's conflict! How much can God do! How much is he actually doing! In the communion of the spirit with him in prayer; in the bright image, heavenly counsels, and divine spirit of Jesus; in the hope which takes hold on eternity; in the call for sympathy with those, who are drinking of the bitter cup with us; in the calls to duty, in the constantly varying scenes of our discipline; in our opportunities to do good; in the calls of affection to supply, as we may be able, the loss which death has occasioned; in every thing calculated to awaken religious trust and hope, to give activity to our affections and to awaken within us a deep feeling of duty, — God is imparting to us spiritual power, and raising us from the depths of sorrow to a lively activity, and to gracious anticipations. My earnest prayer is, that you will drink in the consolations which God imparts, that you may come from the furnace like gold purified in the fire.

ON THE DEATH OF A CHILD.

Nov. 26, 1832.

I most deeply sympathise with you in your afflictions. You must have felt a peculiar tenderness for the little sufferer, who was for a short period cast upon your kindness, and the heart must bleed, when wounded in the tenderest and holiest affection. But the affliction, which you have experienced, stands not alone ; it awakens a train of sad recollections, and calls up, to cloud your mind and distress your heart, sorrows, which have come upon you in melancholy frequency and severity. But surely the events, which have removed from you the cherished and the loved, have not passed without the knowledge of a Father above ; they have not taken place by chance ; and, though mysterious, the Christian must believe, and ought to feel as if he believed, that they are the appointment of infinite wisdom and love. I must say to you, that I am distressed by the state of feeling, which your last letter manifests. God forbid, that I should censure, or that in any thing I may say, I should seem to desire to make the impression, that I have a right, by any personal superiority in the school of Christ, to utter rebukes. I trust that it has been one effect of my own recent sufferings to teach me a fuller sympathy with the spiritual as well as physical trials of the afflicted. Full well I know, that such effects may be produced by the trials of life upon the mind itself, as will for a season render it incapable of receiving the full and abounding consolations of the gospel ; but this is a state of spiritual disease, and while it should be regarded with deep commiseration, the afflicted should be taught to feel, that it ought to be resisted and healed ; that it may be resisted and healed, by the grace of God. Now, my friend, do you feel as if it was the hand of a Father, which is upon you ? and that you ought with your whole soul to cling to him, to confide in him, to love him, to inquire for his will, particularly to apply yourself to the

duties of life, to make the friends who yet remain to you more happy, to breathe into their souls the very spirit of a confiding, cheerful piety, and to exert an influence favorable to their present and everlasting joy ? or do you feel the sorrow of the world, which worketh death ?

It seems to you most mysterious, that the little one, whose sufferings and death have so deeply afflicted you, "should have been cast into your arms only to perish there, that the strong fountain of love opened in your bosom, should flow only to water the grave." True, it is mysterious ; but when you consult your own benevolent heart, can you for a moment believe, that the perfect God could have committed to you this charge, and taken it from you only to occasion suffering ? It is impossible. Did not the care of this tender child serve in some degree to assuage the griefs which the death of the lamented mother caused ? And what means the exciting of benevolent affections in our bosoms, if it does not show a care for our happiness ? No, my friend, it is not to make us suffer, that benevolent affections are excited within us, though these affections may be wounded. God is, in the solicitude manifested by him to supply us with objects of interest while we are on earth, teaching us how to love ; kindling within us a light, which is to expand and brighten through eternity ; guiding, by the aid of earthly objects of affection, our love to himself, the great fountain of love. Our danger is, that our affections will rest upon the earth. Hence it is the arrangement of divine wisdom, that imperfection, uncertainty and change mark the objects, to which our hearts here attach themselves, and as they disappoint our hopes, we feel, that we have a power of loving, which nothing earthly can satisfy. God then is brought into our hearts to fill them with his own perfections, and to give us the assurance of happiness. Then only are we truly happy, when we give ourselves, our minds and our hearts, our friends, our all, to God. How much discipline, and what, may be requisite to bring us to the perfect love of God, he only knows. O could we hear

the accents of those, who have gone before us to the world of bliss, they would rebuke our impatience, and inspire us with the confiding, benevolent, pious spirit of Jesus. Even could you gain a glimpse of the countenance of that now happy child, over whom you have shed many tears of distress, how would its gentle and joyous features plead with you to trust in God, to rejoice in hope.

IN REPLY TO ONE WHO ASKED RELIGIOUS COUNSEL.

. . . . It seems to me, that, with the good purposes which you cherish, and the pious affections which you cultivate, you may and ought to rejoice evermore; that you may and ought to find in your religion a calm and soul sustaining joy. Permit me plainly to suggest to you some counsels, which, though they may not meet all your wishes, by God's blessing may afford you some comfort.

However you may distrust yourself, you cannot doubt that you feel a deep interest in the Saviour and an earnest desire to cherish his spirit. Now let me entreat you to examine the whole course of Christ's ministry and contemplate his blessed character, and then to ask yourself, whether you ought not to rejoice. When did he ever drive from his presence a humble, trembling sinner, or make the religious sensibilities of the heart instruments of distress? It was for the proud Pharisee, boasting of his righteousness, or for those who despised his character and teachings, that he reserved the severity of his rebukes; and even over them he poured forth the tears of compassion. He spake encouragement and comfort for you. Be thankful for the religious sensibility which is active in your bosom. Give to God daily your praise that he has not left you to build your hope of happiness upon the mere possessions or pleasures of the earth; that he has not permitted you to be indifferent to the great salvation; but that he has inspired you with a hatred of sin and love of holiness. To be thus

thankful for the interest which you feel in religion, seems to me to be your duty ; and I am sure that the cherishing this feeling of gratitude will be a comfort to you. It is true, you may feel how far short you fall of that perfect standard of goodness which the gospel holds up to you. I should pity the Christian, however advanced, who did not feel this ; for he must be wretchedly deluded, who believes that he is already *perfect*. But, my friend, if there is in your heart a love of goodness, ought you not to give thanks ? If you have made any attainment in piety, however small, ought you not to bless God ? True, there is much yet to be obtained. Should you think, that the man who loves wealth supremely would be wise, were he to despise a small estate, because he desired a large one ? No, you would say, that he ought to rejoice in the attainments which he had acquired, and make them the instruments and encouragements to greater exertion. Is he who desires spiritual riches to be ungrateful, or discouraged, because he is not perfect in Christ Jesus ? No, he is to rejoice that he has a desire to be perfect — he is to give thanks for the measure of the gifts imparted to him, and to press forward toward perfection. Be persuaded, then, to be thankful, that you hate that which is evil and love that which is good. Give glory to God, and trust him for his grace to carry you onward in the Christian course.

But it is this onward course, this constant improvement, which you find it difficult to pursue. You fear that you are stationary, and hence your anxiety. It will be well for you to form distinct and definite views of what religion is designed to do for you. This will preserve you from error and distress. You will always be embarrassed, if you take without qualification the lives and experiences of other Christians as your guide. These may aid you in your Christian course ; but they are so various and imperfect, that they cannot safely be made your models. If you would be guided safely in your inquiries as to what religion is designed to do for you, you must learn from the Christian

scriptures what kind of character Christianity is designed to form. In one word, inquire what is the spirit of Jesus. There have been many disputes respecting the rank which he holds, but about the spirit which he exhibited there need be none. Here all is plain, instructive, encouraging, and joyful. Study the character of Jesus. How mild and gentle was his spirit, how calm and confiding his piety, how pure and benevolent his life! Study the character of Jesus, and you will not expect from your religion ecstasies, but to find in God a Father, to feel that he is your Father, to love him in this character, to connect him with all your joys and sorrows; to experience a purifying, exalting, and sustaining influence from your faith; to enjoy, amidst the varying scenes of life, a cheerful trust in God; to enjoy the religious principle as one which approves itself to your mind, purifies your affections, connects you with man by the cords of love, animates you to cheerful efforts in doing good, and makes the future administer to your virtue and joy, giving you the anticipation of increasing light and ever-growing resemblance to the perfect Being, and a happiness ever improving as your character advances. Surely you cannot be discouraged, if, with an open and confiding heart, you study your religion in the character of its blessed Author; nor can you fail, though your progress may not answer to your desires, to grow in grace. * * *

But it is with you a very anxious inquiry, how you shall preserve yourself from evil, bind yourself more and more closely to God, and continually advance in the graces and comforts of your faith. I repeat it, — that you have a disposition to advance is a great blessing, which you cannot too thankfully acknowledge. In making this advancement, you will observe that there are certain instrumental duties which are prescribed by Jesus, such as secret prayer, attention to the instruction and ordinances of religion, &c.

Let it be carefully kept in mind, that the duties of piety are intended not to benefit God but man. They are not a price paid to obtain the divine favor, but the instruments of

improvement; they give the power of enjoying God and the comforts of religion. Hence it is apparent that they, who shut themselves out from the world, cut themselves off from its innocent pleasures, and inflict painful penances upon themselves for the mere purpose of making themselves more acceptable to God, by means of these voluntary sacrifices inflicted without use, and entirely without reference to the improvement of the character,—fall into a most ruinous mistake. They represent God not as a father, but as a tyrant; and religion not as the guide, friend and comforter of man, but as a cruel taskmaster.

The commanded duties of piety you will religiously observe, holding always in view their rational and benevolent character. You will find that even in the performance of these a reference to their designed effect will greatly aid you. For example, there are no specific directions given for the conduct of secret devotion, and much is left to the determination of individual minds. Now it seems to me that for most Christians, (I judge from my own experience principally) long periods should not be assigned to secret prayer. The true spirit of actual worship languishes, when our addresses to God are carried to a great length. Seasons spent in retirement for the purposes of religious improvement should be mostly occupied in endeavors to enrich our minds by reading, and to excite proper affections by meditation, and as the feelings are warmed, prayer should flow forth warm from the heart, and the spirit rise to God in sweet communion, as in the deep felt expressions of our wants and our penitence, or our thanksgivings. All such prayers will be short; and in answer to them we may expect, that God will grant his spirit, and that we shall gain divine encouragement. Even amid the busy cares of life and the throng of society, the spirit of devotion may be maintained, and short ejaculations or gentle breathings of piety may go up to the throne of mercy. But I cannot but think, that the endeavor to engage for long periods of time in actual

prayer, and that frequently, will rather depress than excite the spirit of devotion.

In reading the lives of devoted disciples of Jesus, you discover that they have adopted various plans of improvement, which are not laid down in the Christian scriptures. Some of these have been adapted to persons peculiarly constituted and tempted ; some of them have been wise, and some of them injudicious and useless, if not worse than useless. You will carefully distinguish between the commanded and uncommanded duties of piety. The former you will religiously perform ; the latter you will practise or not, as they may be suited to promote your spiritual advancement or not. Many good men have practised frequent fastings. To some it may have been useful ; to many, I doubt not, it has been very injurious. Fasting is not a commanded duty under the Christian dispensation. To those whose lives are regulated by a strict regard to temperance, I doubt whether it can often be made subservient to piety. I have thought much on this subject, and for myself I can say, that I am convinced that fasting would be injurious to me. I find frequent occasion for humiliation and prayer, but seldom for fasting. Others must judge in this as in every other uncommanded means of piety, whether it be suited to promote in them a spirit of piety or not. And in judging of the adaptation of particular means of religion, (I speak of means which are not commanded,) we are not to determine their worth to us by the depth of feeling which they may excite, but by the healthy and cheerful, active, submissive and confiding affections which they call forth. There is much feeling often in religion which is diseased ; which manifests a strong sense of religion in the soul, but brings forth no useful virtues, and contributes not at all to the soul's happiness.

With respect to seclusion from the world, I would remark, that it is manifest to me, that entire seclusion, so far from being a virtue, is a sin. We are called not to fly from the world, but to form our characters for heaven amid its trials

and dangers, and to make the world better by our efforts. It is a law of our religion that we should love our brother as ourselves. But how is this love to be cherished? By mingling freely with our fellow men; by a ready sympathy with them in their sorrows and joys. We are not to be always in a throng; there are to be seasons, when we are to be alone with our consciences and our God; but solitude as well as society has its moral dangers. An enlightened sense of duty alone can guide us in this matter.

I have spoken of religious means; but we ought not to suppose that our spiritual growth is then only promoted when we are attending to the instrumental duties of religion. God is every where, and always acting upon us by the circumstances of our being, as well as by his spirit, for our good. The scenery of nature around us is giving lessons to the well disposed mind; the changes of life, its pleasures and its trials, the cheerful intercourse of society, the mother's care for her children, every thing, is acting upon the soul, and, if it be in a Christian temper, acting for good. We may gain divine power from all that is passing around us; and we use amiss our instrumental duties, if they are not made to open our hearts to the influence of God at all times; we think unworthily of his blessing, if we confine our religious improvement to the mere seasons of devotion. I beg of you then to keep in mind, that when, with a right spirit, you are entering into appropriate enjoyments and duties of life, you are as much working out your salvation, as when engaged in your devotions.

I have not spoken of the first step in the Christian life, deep sorrow for sin; because I am persuaded you have cherished the requisite sensibilities on this subject. I have only to entreat you to regard God as your father, and to let your religion partake of a filial confidence and joy. As a parent you will be able to understand the endearing relation in which you stand to the Supreme Being, and you will not, while it is your highest desire to glorify God, throw over his character the gloomy coloring of a

tyrant's features. Place not too much confidence in men, or in the rules which human wisdom has prescribed ; but go at once to Jesus, and learn of him. Expect not raptures, but endeavor to form a rational faith, and to judge of your own character by your practical abhorrence of evil, by your love of goodness, by your *gratitude* for blessings, by your submission in trials, by your readiness in duty. You will not forget those for whom you are accustomed to offer your prayers. As you think of them, you will remember that your influence in guiding them heavenward will greatly depend upon your forcing upon them the conviction, that your faith is the source of your best joys, of your brightest hopes. You cannot inflict a deeper wound upon religion, than by representing it as gloomy and forbidding. If you find in yourself a natural propensity to dwell upon dark images, you will feel it to be more imperiously your duty to dwell upon the divine love, and to fill your soul with a sense of God's paternal goodness. You may be happy. God designs you for happiness, and may you so improve his grace that you may rejoice evermore.







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